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THE ROLE OF BARRIERS TO ENTRY IN THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF NEW MAGAZINES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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THE ROLE OF BARRIERS TO ENTRY IN THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF NEW MAGAZINES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The concept of "barriers to entry" has been well established in economic research, but has not been extensively applied to the magazine publishing industry, despite its potential utility in exploring the high failure rate of new magazine. Barriers to entry are defined as factors which give existing market participants advantages over new market entrants. This exploratory study compares one new magazine, at the time of its inception, to three established magazines. The results suggest that established publications do enjoy some market advantages such as larger subscriber bases and high levels of revenue; however, new publications can gain competitive advantages through such factors such as retail price and staff expertise. The results suggest several promising directions for more intensive research.

THE ROLE OF BARRIERS TO ENTRY IN THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF NEW MAGAZINES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Introduction

The failure rate of new magazines is extremely high. Fewer than one in 10 magazine concepts ever acquires the capital to produce the first issue, and of those that survive past the first issue, only 50 percent will continue to publish, many under a new name, with new content, or with a new publisher.[1] Of those that continue to publish, only 10 percent will become extremely successful.[2]

This high failure rate may be partly due to the complicated nature of magazine publishing. Unlike other businesses, which usually have one revenue stream stemming from product or service sales, magazine publishers must balance at least two revenue streams: product sales (circulation) and advertising sales.[3] Some publishing companies also rely on revenue streams from additional sources such as ancillary products (e.g. calendars, coffee mugs, and issue binders) and special services (e.g. subscriber list rental). In addition to managing multiple revenue streams, magazine publishers must also compete with entrenched incumbents for regional, national, and even international advertising and circulation dollars, and with other media products such as cable television, videocassettes, compact discs, books, newspapers, and

computer-related goods and services.

Thus, a new magazine faces many possible detours on the road to success. In the field of economics, factors affecting whether a new product is a success or a failure are labeled "barriers to entry": more specifically, barriers to entry are those factors causing disadvantages to market entrants relative to established businesses.[4] While the term "barriers to entry" implies barriers which prevent new products from ever reaching the marketplace, the specific barriers encompassed by the terminology actually apply to both the initial entry of the new product into the market and to the development of the product into a success or failure.

The purpose of this paper is to use the concept of "barriers to entry" to explore some of the reasons why a new magazine might succeed or fail. After a discussion of barriers to entry and their potential application to the magazine market, data from four Seattle-area magazines - one new, three established - will be employed to explore whether barriers to entry, as delineated in the economic model, played a role in the new magazine's fate.

Barriers to Entry

The concept of barriers to entry was originated by Joe S. Bain and extended by other economists, most notably Michael Porter. Initially. the concept described three sources of

advantage for established products that discouraged new entrants to the market: absolute cost advantages, product differentiation, and economies of scale.[5] Each of these factors will be described in terms of their applicability to magazine publishing.

In the magazine industry, "absolute cost advantages" refers to the financial advantage enjoyed by established magazines, compared to the high start-up costs (e.g. administration, investment capital, marketing) faced by entrants. Absolute cost advantages would also be generated by skilled staff members employed at an established publishing firm, compared to the cost disadvantages generated by unskilled or inexperienced employees at the new magazine. Another source of absolute cost advantages might be technological or production expertise not generally available to the market, or developed specifically for the exclusive use of one publication.

"Product differentiation" refers to a barrier that is encountered if a reader prefers to purchase established magazines, or if an advertiser prefers to purchase space in a magazine with a recognized market identity or audience. The new entrant to the market must sufficiently differentiate itself from existing product in order to attract readers and advertisers, but must not be so different as to alienate those with established reading and buying habits; this process of identity development has been referred to as "editorial positioning" in the magazine

literature.[6] Porter suggests that a new entry to a market may be forced to spend heavily in order to overcome customer loyalty to existing products[7]; for magazines, this may be especially true in entrants to markets with numerous existing titles and well-established market leaders (e.g. television guides, women's consumer magazines). Another product differentiation advantage enjoyed by established publishers or magazines is access to distributive outlets.

"Economies of scale" refers to the ability of established producers to create and market product in such large volumes and at such reduced prices that potential entrants are discouraged from entering the market. This term can also describe advantages related to established producers' past experience, such as the intensity with which they advertise, and research and development programs which they may have underway.[8] Economies of scale are used to advantage by existing publications, in such tactics as increasing print runs of existing magazines to flood the market, or in dropping prices of existing magazines to make the entry of new products economically impossible.

Three further barriers to entry were identified by Michael Porter in 1979[9]; incumbent reaction, cost disadvantages independent of size, and government policy. "Incumbent reaction" refers to activities deliberately undertaken by existing producers to discourage new entrants to the market, including those

activities described above which are made possible by economies of scale.

"Cost disadvantages independent of size" are those cost advantages attainable only by established firms, regardless of the size of or resources available to newcomers to the market. For established magazines, these would include such factors as greater advancement along the learning curve and proprietary knowledge such as knowledge of sources or specialized production processes. A survey identifying the 11 major reasons why magazines fail[10] named several causes of failure which could be identified as cost disadvantages independent of size: poor or inexperienced management, misreading the advertising environment, the wrong personnel, bad advice, and "stupidity, craziness and arrogance".

"Government policy", a fairly self-explanatory title, broadly refers to any relevant regulations or licensing requirements affecting the industry. More specific to magazines would be factors such as postal regulations, local business licensing, or regulations on the use of potentially toxic raw materials (e.g. materials used in the composition of printers' coloured ink).

Subsequent researchers have identified as many as 25 barriers to entry[11]. While this discussion will focus on the six barriers to entry identified above, as these are the most commonly discussed and explored in the economic literature, it is worth

noting that these subsequent researchers have also contributed the idea that barriers to entry can be classified by their cause. Karakaya and Stahl[11] distinguish between competitor-activated, or controllable, barriers to entry and environmental, or uncontrollable, barriers to entry. This distinction will be further explored in this paper.

THE STUDY

In order to explore the role that barriers to entry play in the success or failure of new magazines, four Seattle-area magazines were studied: one new entrant to the market and three established competitors. While this is a limited sample size, it was chosen to facilitate the collection of data. At the time of the study (spring 1992), the new entrant to the market, *Greater Seattle* magazine, had just published its first issue, so the study could be conceptualized as a "snapshot" at the moment of entry to the marketplace and thus an ideal time to assess barriers to entry. This new entrant and its competitors all had editorial offices located in Seattle and had product distributed mainly in the Seattle area, assisting in data collection as the first author was located in Seattle at the time the study was conducted.

The Subject Magazines

Although *Greater Seattle* entered the market in 1992, it was

related to an earlier publication, *Seattle Home and Garden*, launched in 1989. The publisher of *Seattle Home and Garden* was also responsible for another magazine, *Pacific Northwest*, which had been in existence for 26 years. *Seattle Home and Garden* was mysteriously "relaunched" in December 1991, with an issue bearing the identifier Vol. 1 No. 1 (despite the fact that the magazine had already been published for two years), but this "new" version only lasted for two issues before it was dropped and replaced with *Greater Seattle*.

As an entertainment and lifestyle magazine dedicated to aspects of life in Seattle, *Greater Seattle* faced several challenges in its entry to the marketplace. Firstly, its name might evoke associations with *Seattle*, an earlier (and unrelated) publication that angered many readers with its sensationalistic approach[12]. Secondly, it faced the task of distinguishing itself and surviving apart from the other larger and well established publication from its parent company. And thirdly, it was faced with competition from several earlier publications targeting the same market - the upscale, higher-income Seattle resident and/or business executive.

Pacific Northwest, founded in 1966, was the publication already produced by *Greater Seattle*'s parent company, Pacific Northwest Inc. It was a competitor for advertisers and perhaps readers. *Washington CEO*, produced by Fivash Publishing and started in 1989, had a heavy Seattle emphasis in its editorial and

advertising content, despite the statewide title. And *Alaska Airlines*, produced by Paradigm Publishing and started in 1985, was an in-flight magazine for a Seattle-based airline.

Data Collection

In order to examine the question of the effects of the six barriers to entry, the March/April 1992 or April 1992 issues of *Greater Seattle*, *Pacific Northwest*, *Washington CEO*, and *Alaska Airlines* were content-analyzed. Information about each publication was taken from *Gale's Directory of Periodicals*, and a media kit was obtained from each magazine's publisher, with the exception of *Alaska Airlines'* publishing firm, Paradigm Publications, who did not respond to requests. In addition, a literature review was conducted of *Folio* and *Magazine Week* for the years 1991 and 1992 for any articles that might discuss these publications and/or barriers to entry.

Results

For each of the six barriers to entry identified above, the relevant information collected about each magazine is presented.

Absolute Cost Advantages

Collecting data about this particular barrier to entry proved to be extremely difficult, because of the unwillingness of publishing companies to reveal financial information in a highly competitive market. However, several pieces of information allow

the inference of some of the cost advantages enjoyed by the existing publications in the study. *Pacific Northwest*, as the oldest publication of the four examined, likely enjoyed some cost advantages as the most experienced and longest lasting publication. *Alaska Airlines*, as an in-flight magazine, had its parent company pay its costs and likely allotted a budget for its production, allowing cost advantages to its producers. In addition, as a magazine distributed on board airplanes, it enjoyed a cost savings because it was not sold by subscription or on newsstands. No information available about *Washington CEO* suggested that it enjoyed any particular cost advantages. *Greater Seattle*, as the newcomer, managed to overcome some of the initial cost disadvantages by being the product of an established (and profitable) publishing house and the re-creation of an existing magazine, thus eliminating many of the start-up costs that would be faced by a new publication. Thus, for this barrier to entry, *Greater Seattle* faced factors that were largely environmental or uncontrollable, because of their emergence through the age or parentage of the existing magazines.

Product Differentiation

Below are comparative data covering a number of points on which a new entrant to a magazine market might be expected to differentiate itself.

Frequency of Publication

Greater Seattle	6 times/year
Pacific Northwest	9 times/year
Washington CEO	6 times/year
Alaska Airlines	12 times/year

Advertising Rates

	4-colour page	black&white page
Greater Seattle	$3,500	$2,900
Pacific Northwest	$5,445	$4,280
Washington CEO	$3,340	$2,475
Alaska Airlines	$4,180	$3,265

Size, Pages and Advertising Percentage

	Pages	Ad Pages	Ad Percentage
Greater Seattle	64	24.5	32
Pacific Northwest	92	41.5	45
Washington CEO	64	25.5	40
Alaska Airlines	80	34.1	43

Percentage of Pages With Colour[13]

Greater Seattle	76
Pacific Northwest	72
Washington CEO	67
Alaska Airlines	84

Average Number of National Ads Per Issue

Greater Seattle	5 out of 47
Pacific Northwest	23 out of 183
Washington CEO	7 out of 66
Alaska Airlines	26 out of 103

Price

	Issue Price	Subscription
Greater Seattle	1.95	9.95
Pacific Northwest	2.95	18.95
Washington CEO	2.95	19.95
Alaska Airlines[14]	n/a	n/a

Paid Circulation and Coverage Area

	Paid Circulation	Coverage Area
Greater Seattle	34,000	Greater Seattle area
Pacific Northwest	70,000	Washington, Oregon
Washington CEO	20,000	Seattle & Washington
Alaska Airlines	n/a[15]	West Coast & Alaska

Editorial Content

Greater Seattle	Focus on Greater Seattle. Trends, profiles, homes, neighbourhoods, pets, restaurants, recipes, nightlife, entertainment
Pacific Northwest	Focus on Western United States and Canada. Travel, calendars, restaurants, getaways, advertorial
Washington CEO	Focus on Washington State. Business leader profiles, corporate retreats, technology, politics, management, health care, investments
Alaska Airlines	Focus on the West Coast, Alaska, and specific Alaska Airlines destinations (Seattle, Portland, Juneau, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego). Travel, entertainment, restaurants, business, luggage, games, maps

Design Factors

	Cover	Layouts	Ad Placement	Extras
Greater Seattle	coated	upbeat	most FFHRP[16]	bingo card
Pacific Northwest	varnished	busy	anywhere	2 bingos
Washington CEO	coated	stodgy	middle 2/3rds	advertorial
Alaska Airlines	varnished	slick	anywhere	none

The creators of *Greater Seattle* were apparently well aware of the barrier to entry posed by insufficient product differentiation. *Greater Seattle* was different from at leat two of its three its competitors in frequency of publication, number of pages, design, and editorial content. Interestingly, *Greater Seattle* had chosen to enter the market at a price lower than that of its competitors; this strategy of lower pricing is often used not by new entrants but by existing competitors attempting to make the entry of new products economically impossible. This strategy could be seen as a response to a competitor-activated barrier to entry.

Economies of Scale

Again, comparative data that relate to this barrier to entry are presented. Underlying these data is the presumption, taken from the economic literature, that the larger the scale of production, the lower the cost per unit.

Circulation

Greater Seattle	34,000
Pacific Northwest	97,000
Washington CEO	20,000
Alaska Airlines	42,000

Estimated Annual Revenue[17]

	Advertising	Circulation	Total Revenue
Greater Seattle	532,500	338,300	870,800
Pacific Northwest	1,755,855	1,326,500	3,082,355
Washington CEO	633,618	399,000	1,032,618
Alaska Airlines	1,571,871	n/a	1,571,871

Number of Staff

Pacific Northwest Inc.	31
(publisher of both Greater Seattle and Pacific Northwest)	
Fivash Publishing	18
Paradigm Publishing	25
(publisher of both Alaska Airlines and a local public television station's program guide)	

As a new entrant to the market, *Greater Seattle* had a somewhat smaller circulation than its competitors (although, notably, higher than one existing publication). This suggests that it may not have had access to the same economies of scale enjoyed by its competitors. However, *Greater Seattle* shared a publisher and staff with an existing publication. Thus, despite being a new publication, *Greater Seattle* may have enjoyed some economies of scale from its association with an established publisher; this may have helped it overcome some environmental barriers to entry that

other new entrants may not have been able to overcome. In effect, *Greater Seattle* overcame some environmental, or uncontrollable, barriers to entry by affiliating itself with an existing market participant, thus converting those barriers to entry into controllable barriers.

Incumbent Reaction

No relevant data were available.

Cost Disadvantages Irrelevant of Size

Staff Expertise

The 31 staff members and freelancers for *Greater Seattle* also produced *Pacific Northwest*. Ten staffers had also worked on *Greater Seattle*'s predecessor, *Seattle Home and Garden*. In addition, the lithographer and the printer used by this publication had also been under contract to the previous publication. The magazine's publisher had also been publisher of the previous publication. This suggests that *Greater Seattle* may have benefited from cost advantages associated with the experience of some of its staff: an example of a competitor-activated or controllable barrier to entry, since the publication may have been able to overcome lack of experience in some areas by having staff who had more or better experience than staff at existing publications.

Two of *Washington CEO*'s staff members had been with the

publication since its inception. The publisher had an extensive background in media, including stints as a newspaper publisher and chief executive officer, when he purchased the magazine from its founder. This also suggests cost advantages associated with staff expertise.

Information about the work experience of the staff at *Pacific Northwest* and *Alaska Airlines* was not available.

Proprietary Production Processes

Evidence of any proprietary production processes may be found in the design and layout of the magazine. In this respect, *Pacific Northwest* appeared to have an advantage. It accepted 13 different sizes of display ads, compared to 10 at *Alaska Airlines* and 9 at *Washington CEO*. In addition, *Pacific Northwest* was able to offer advertisers boxed advertisements, sized by the inch, in classified advertisements, and "liners", sized by the line, also in classifieds. "Liners" were also available with a spot-colour highlight (an effect resembling the type coloured with a neon yellow highlighter pen). *Pacific Northwest* accommodated advertising of all sizes and shapes, whether or not the ads fit the magazine's grid, and offered special sections so that products and services could be promoted by the state or region in which they appeared. *Pacific Northwest* thus enjoyed some advantages over its competitors - a competitor-activated barrier to entry - because of its technological ability to offer these special advertising features.

Research and Development

The only evidence of an advantage irrespective of size in this area was the regular reader surveys carried out by the editor of *Washington CEO*. He frequently solicited reader opinion and published the findings in the magazine. Additionally, he frequently hired freelance writers with research experience.

Government Policies

No relevant data giving an advantage or disadvantage to any one publication were discovered. It should be noted that all four magazines were licensed as businesses in the Seattle area and that none received any direct government subsidies.

Discussion

Little work to date has been conducted on the role of barriers to entry in determining a new magazine's success or failure, and the above data indicate to some degree why this is so - collecting data on some of these barriers is extremely difficult, if not impossible. In the extremely competitive magazine market, with high rates of failure for new magazines, publishers are reluctant to release (or to even collect) data which might be a source of advantage for a competing publication. In addition, although the six "barriers to entry" discussed are defined well enough to determine their applicability to the magazine market, they are still relatively broad in nature, so

that it is sometimes difficult to determine precisely which data support their existence or absence.

Nevertheless, from the information and analysis presented, it is possible to determine that barriers to entry do exist and do affect the market viability of new magazines. The barrier of product differentiation appears to be particularly significant for new magazines, and, in the example studied, *Greater Seattle*'s creators appeared to be aware of this barrier and took steps to overcome it by making the magazine distinct from its competitors. The new publication was differentiated on several bases from existing publications, including the important factors of design and content. *Greater Seattle* was also able to overcome the barriers of cost disadvantages irrelevant of size and, to a lesser degree, economies of scale by having an experienced staff that formed part of a larger, more established publishing company.

The barriers of scale which appeared to pose the most threats to *Greater Seattle* were some economies of scale lost through a relatively small circulation and estimated annual revenue. Estimated revenues were reduced in part by the magazine's lower cover price than its competitors, which possibly could gain market advantage (in the form of increased sales volume and market share) but which initially also had the effect of reducing revenues. *Greater Seattle* also faced some cost disadvantages irrelevant of size because of its inability to offer specialized advertising features and its apparent lack of research and development (an

area which would seem especially important for a new entrant to the market).

An interesting result from applying the concept of barriers to entry to the magazine market is the flexibility that occurs between controllable and uncontrollable barriers to entry. Because of the similar nature of the product and the general similarity in production processes, environmental or uncontrollable factors may not be as prevalent or as powerful in the magazine industry as they are in other industries (e.g. those relying on variable supplies of raw materials or on seasonal markets). Because of the intense competition in the magazine industry, competitor-activated or controllable barriers to entry may be more significant in determining a new product's continued existence. While entrants to the magazine industry must be responsive to the actions of the competition, they must, at the same time, not venture too far from the established norms of the market and not respond to competitiors in a manner too radically different from established market participants. As mentioned previously, a mistake in "editorial positioning" can alienate both advertisers and readers, and result in the failure of even the most promising and best-supported publication.

Directions For Future Research

While this study is exploratory in nature and based on mainly secondary data, it suggests that the concept of "barriers to

entry" may be extremely useful in understanding and predicting the market fate of new magazines. This study was limited by its focus on four regional magazines and six barriers to entry; given the 25 barriers to entry identified by researchers and the numerous magazine markets domestically and internationally, studies identifying the most relevant or powerful barriers to entry in particular markets would be of great benefit to those considering entry into those markets. Another distinctive feature of the magazine market is the re-launch, redesign, or change of publishers that less successful magazines frequently undergo; research on barriers to entry (and their subsequent impact on products that do succeed in entering the marketplace) might be valuable in identifying those factors that would affect the "re-entry" to the marketplace of reworked existing publications.

Another direction that research on barriers to entry might take is longitudinal analysis of a magazine or sample of magazines. Observing the factors that affect the success or failure of magazines over their lifetime, rather than simply at the time of their entry into the market, would provide information on which factors are of particular importance in establishing the long-term viability of a publication.

From both the theoretical discussion and the market and product data investigated in this study, it can be seen that the concept of "barriers to entry" offers new publishers and communication researchers alike an opportunity to better

understand the role of startups in the magazine industry.

Footnotes

[1]John Klingel, "Will Your New Magazine Idea Fly?", in *The Handbook of Magazine Publishing* (Stamford, CT; Cowles Business Media, 1991).

[2]Klingel, op. cit.

[3]John Klingel, "The Economics of Magazine Publishing", in *The Handbook of Magazine Publishing* (Stamford, CT; Cowles Business Media, 1991).

[4]George S. Yip, *Barriers to Entry: A Corporate Strategy Perspective* (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1982).

[5]Yip, op. cit.

[6]David Orlow and Morton Grossman, "Positioning Your Editorial: Key to Ad Sales", in *The Handbook of Magazine Publishing* (Stamford, CT: Cowles Business Publishing, 1991).

[7]Michael Porter, "How Competitive Forces Shape Strategy", *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1979, p. 137-145.

[8]Fahri Karakaya and Michael J. Stahl, *Entry Barriers and Market Entry Decisions* (New York: Westport, CT, 1991).

[9]Porter, op. cit.

[10]Jennifer Howland, "Why New Magazines Fail", in *The Handbook of Magazine Publishing* (Stamford, CT; Cowles Business Media, 1991).

[11]Karakaya and Stahl, op.cit.

[12]Ruby Mae Apsler, "Seattle: Failure of a City Magazine", M.A. thesis, University of Washington, 1977.

[13]Includes four-colour and spot-colour, or spot-colour lookalike obtained with process colour.

[14,15]Offered as part of the passenger's flying experience, i.e. free to all passengers on board Alaska Airlines flights.

[16]FFHRP=far forward, right hand page (a reference to the most desirable positions for advertisers).

[17]Estimated revenue={[colour ad pages X colour ad rate] + [black and white ad pages X black and white ad rate]} X frequency. Because of lack of reliable information, no allowance has been made for discounts given preferred customers.

An American Title Abroad:

A Cross-Cultural Study of One Popular Magazine in the U. S. and the UK

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of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication,
at the 1997 Annual Conference in Chicago, Ill.

Running Head: AN AMERICAN TITLE ABROAD

An American Title Abroad:

A Cross-Cultural Study of One Popular Magazine in the U. S. and the UK

Abstract

This study examines one major American-owned magazine, Good Housekeeping, as it is published in the United States and the United Kingdom. Through a combination of methodologies--content analysis, interviews with editors, and interpretation of industry data--the researcher examined how cultural, demographic, geographic, and economic factors influence editorial content in different countries, despite a strong brand name that identifies the parent and subsidiary publications as the "same" magazine.

An American Title Abroad:

A Cross-Cultural Study of One Popular Magazine in the U. S. and the UK

Many American magazines publish international editions, more than a dozen doing so in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this study was to examine one such title on both sides of the Atlantic, and to answer this question: To what extent do cultural, demographic, geographic, and economic factors influence editorial content in an international edition, despite a strong brand name that identifies the parent and subsidiary publications as the "same" magazine?

The subject of the study is Good Housekeeping[1], which has been published in the United States since 1885 and in the UK since 1922. The British title is one of 11 international editions of the magazine and is published by the National Magazine Company, a wholly-owned British subsidiary of The Hearst Corporation, whose flagship magazine is American Good Housekeeping.[2] Yet the British version of the title is edited by a full editorial staff based in the home country and operates independently of the American staff.

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[1] The author was an editor at the American Good Housekeeping from 1986 to 1994 (an association that provides extra insight yet, most likely, some bias as well).

[2] Hearst, which also owns a newspaper chain, TV and radio stations, and a new-media division, publishes 16 magazines in the U. S. and 10 under the UK National Magazine Company. Five of the latter are American titles (Good Housekeeping, Esquire, Cosmopolitan, Country Living, House Beautiful).

In both countries, Good Housekeeping (identified in many subsequent references merely as GH) is part of one of the largest revenue-producing segments of the consumer magazine industry: the "women's interest" category. In the U. S., 82 out of a total 2539 consumer titles are women's magazines, a category that yields $2.87 billion (14 percent) of a total $19.9 billion industry revenues (Folio: 500, 1995; Magazine Publishers of America, 1995; Standard Rate and Data Service, 1995). In the UK, women's magazines account for 69 of the country's 2164 consumer titles and produce about £346 million (18.5 percent) of a total £1.87 billion industry revenues (Coffin, 1996; P. Cutts, Marketing Director, Periodical Publishers Association, personal communication, July 15, 1996).

Both the American and British editions of GH have relatively new editors-in-chief. Pat Roberts Cairns replaced Sally O'Sullivan at British GH in late 1995, appearing on the masthead with the February 1996 issue; at the same time, Ellen Levine was starting her second full year at American GH, after John Mack Carter's two decades editing the magazine. The new editors have been charged by the parent company with increasing readership and advertising sales (which is itself a function of readership). Within the last two years, both magazines have undergone significant changes in staff, content, and design: British GH was redesigned with its February 1996 issue and American GH with its September 1996 issue (the second redesign in two years). Thus, each of the magazines discussed here is under the direction of a new editor who has devoted recent and considerable thought to who her readers are and how her magazine serves them.

The Literature

A search of the literature in communication, the humanities, the social sciences, and women's studies revealed no studies of this exact nature (a comparison of the same magazine in two countries); in fact, it revealed that very little comparative research has been done on the U. S. and UK magazine industries. One scholarly study of British and American magazines focused exclusively on advertising content, though it offered an interesting insight: the researchers found that U. S. print ads stressed American individuality and were high in information content, while British print ads played to class differences and contained more subtle messages about products (Frith & Wesson, 1991).

Women's magazines in both the U. S. and the UK have been the subject of a considerable amount of scholarly research, much of it historical (Beetham, 1996; Dancyger, 1978; White, 1970; Winship, 1987). Some studies examine how women's magazines handle certain nonfiction topics, such as rape (Benedict, 1995), women's health (Sacks, 1992), and marriage (Alexander, 1990). Others focus on women's-magazine fiction (Bailey, 1969; Flora, 1979; Lugenbeel, 1975; Makosky, 1966). Still others consider the magazines' impact on readers (Andreasen & Steeves, 1983; Grubb-Swetnam, 1995; Sosanie & Szybillo, 1978).

Several ideological critiques (Ballaster, Beetham, Fraser & Hebron, 1991; Hermes, 1995; McCracken, 1993; Murphy, 1994; Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét, 1978) offer a useful lens through which to view current practice, both the rhetorical strategies employed by women's-magazine writers and editors and the ways in

which readers interpret and use the magazines. A number of descriptive works (Braithwaite & Barrell, 1988; Doughan, 1987; Endres & Lueck, 1995; Riley, 1993; White, 1977) provide a valuable overview of industry structure in both countries and help to explain the place of women's magazines within those industries. While two recent historical works have focused on a single women's magazine, The Ladies' Home Journal (Damon-Moore, 1994; Scanlon, 1995), no major scholarly work has taken Good Housekeeping as its primary subject.

Much of the most relevant literature for this project was not scholarly research, but industry reports from organizations such as the Magazine Publishers of America, the Periodical Publishers Association, Mediamark Research, the Standard Rate and Data Service, and the publishers themselves.

Method

Three methodologies were employed in order to make comparisons between the British and American versions of Good Housekeeping. One aspect of the research was a survey of industry data and a comparative interpretation, within and between the two countries, of demographic and circulation information. This method was used to determine the dominance of the two editions of GH in their respective markets, as well as the ways in which their publishers and editors attempt to position the magazine within those markets.

Second, the researcher interviewed several editors at both U. S. and UK GH. The bulk of the editors' insights reported in this paper came from one editor in each

place, however: Pat Roberts Cairns, the editor-in-chief of British GH, and Diane Brown, the senior articles editor at American GH. While the British editors were interviewed in person and the American editors replied via mail and phone, the following questions were asked of, and answered by, editors in both countries:

(1) How would you describe the typical Good Housekeeping reader?

(2) Why do readers buy the magazine (what do they want from it)?

(3) Why do you use celebrities (U. S.) / models (UK) on the cover?

(4) How do you encourage reader involvement in the magazine?

(5) How many letters per month does the magazine receive, and what do most readers write about?

The third methodology was a content analysis of a year's worth of both editions of the magazine, 24 issues in all, published from October 1995 to September 1996. Every editorial feature in each issue was coded into one of 27 editorial categories, and not only the number of articles, but also the number of pages devoted to each topic was noted. Tables A1 and A2 (Appendix A) show the categories and cumulative page totals for the 12 issues of each magazine. A Coding Key defines the coding categories, though many are self-explanatory.

Interpreting the Industry Data

Data obtained from industry sources in both countries revealed several factors that determine the status of each edition within its respective market and that distinguish the two editions from each other: circulation; delivery systems; the

division of the women's-magazine market into weekly and monthly titles in one country but not the other; and reader demographics, as compared to those of competing magazines, a factor that enables GH to position itself as "upmarket" in one country but not the other.

Circulation and Delivery Systems

The difference between the U. S. and the UK in population[3] and land size is mirrored by the single greatest discrepancy between American and British Good Housekeeping: circulation. During the time frame of this study, 5,372,786 copies of American GH were purchased each month, and a total of about 25 million people read the magazine (this is "total readership," based on how many people read each copy).[4] Each month in the UK, 488,243 copies of British GH are purchased, and a total two million people read the magazine (GH Media Kit [U. S.]/Media Pack [UK], 1996). A similarly great contrast in the circulations of the 20 top-selling women's magazines in the two countries can be seen in Table B1 in Appendix B. The 25-million total readership of U. S. Good Housekeeping alone is greater than the total readership of all UK women's magazines combined, 17.3 million (Coffin, 1996).

Circulation differences also result in major differences in advertising revenue, which is itself based on readership figures. A full-page four-color ad costs about £19,000 in British GH and about $161,000 in American GH; total annual ad

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[3] Current (1996) population is 265.6 million in the U. S. and 58.5 million in the U. K. (U. S. Census Bureau Homepage, 1996; International Data Base, U. S. Census Bureau Homepage, 1996).

[4] American GH has since lowered its "rate base" (guaranteed circulation).

revenue is about £13 million for the UK magazine versus about $207 million for the U. S. magazine (Advertising Fact Book, 1995; GH Media Kit [U. S.]/Media Pack [UK], 1996; Periodical Publishers Association, 1996).[5]

Geographical contrasts between the two countries lead to another difference between the two editions of GH: their delivery systems. Because of the wide geographical distribution of American readers, the most common delivery system for American GH is mail, and 74 percent of purchasers are subscribers. Because of the smaller size of the UK and the geographical concentration of British readers, the most common delivery system for British GH is single-copy sales, and 66 percent of purchasers buy the magazine on the newsstand.

British Women's Weeklies versus Women's Monthlies

Unlike the U. S., the UK supports two thriving markets of women's magazines: monthlies and weeklies. The monthlies, which include British GH, are also called "glossies" or "qualities" and are similar in content, appearance, and price to American monthly women's magazines. The weeklies are tabloid style, printed on cheaper paper, about a fourth the length and a fourth the price of the monthlies (about 60 pages versus 200-250 pages, and about 50 pence versus about £2). One such weekly women's magazine, Woman's World, thrives in the U. S. but ranks well behind major American women's monthlies in circulation.[6]

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[5] At the time of this study, £19,000 equaled about $30,400 American, and £13 million equaled about $20.8 million American.

[6] Woman's World is published by Bauer, the German company that also publishes the British women's weeklies Take a Break! and Bella.

In the UK, weeklies are more popular than monthlies in the women's market, and the five best-selling women's magazines in Britain are weeklies. (Refer again to Table B1, Appendix B, for lists of the 20 top-circulation women's magazines in each country.) One in every two British women reads a women's weekly (Coffin, 1996). These publications cater to readers who are, on the whole, lower-income and lower-class, creating a "downmarket" within the UK women's magazine field that does not exist as a factor in the U. S. women's market. In the UK, women's monthlies position themselves in opposition to the weeklies, stressing the upmarket nature of their own editorial material and their own readership.

Household Income and "Social Grades"

What the advertising industry refers to as the "quality" of a magazine's readership--and the subsequent positioning of a magazine as "upmarket" or "downmarket"--has to do primarily with affluence. In the U. S., affluence is measured by household income. A comparison of median household income for the top U. S. women's magazines (Table B2, Appendix B) shows American GH's relatively low position: at $37,800, its median reader household income, while 17 percent above the U. S. average of $32,264 (U. S. Census Bureau, 1996), is noticeably below the women's-magazine market average of $42,254.

The median household income for readers of British GH is £22,736, 43 percent higher than the British national average of £15,924 (Helen Peasland, Personal Assistant to the Publishing Director, British GH, personal communication,

September 2, 1996).[7] In the British magazine industry, however, audience quality is measured not by income, but rather by class, or "social grades," symbolized by letters and defined by the occupation of the reader's head of household. Audience comparisons focus on the percentage of a magazine's readership that is "ABC1," falling into the top two social grades, "AB" and "C1." Seventy-two percent of British GH readers are ABC1.

Table B3 (Appendix B) includes social-grade definitions and shows the extent to which readers of British women's monthlies are of a higher social grade than readers of women's weeklies. This table also shows the percentage of British GH readers in each social grade. The right column in Table B2 (Appendix B) lists the ABC1 percentage for each of the major British women's magazines. British GH is second from the top, well above the women's-market average of 56 percent.

Reader age is also considered an element of a magazine audience's quality, though its importance depends on the segment of the women's market in which a magazine is competing (for instance, Good Housekeeping and Ladies' Home Journal compete for 40-ish readers, while Allure competes with Mademoiselle for 20-ish readers). The median reader ages for the two Good Housekeepings are quite similar: 44 in the U. S., and 46 in the UK. These ages place the title at the older end of the women's market in both countries; see Table B4 (Appendix B).

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[7] At the time this study was done, the UK GH household income equaled approximately $36,378 American, and the British national average household income equaled about $25,478 American.

In 1977, Michael Bird of the National Magazine Company devised a system of "age-class" maps on which the median age and ABC1 percentage was plotted for British magazines. In this study, Bird's age-class map has been reconstructed for UK women's magazines, using current demographic data, and a corresponding map--using income rather than social grades--has been constructed for U. S. women's magazines. They are shown in Figures B1 and B2 (Appendix B).

These maps show how the existence of the strong women's weekly magazine market in the UK helps to create a broader reader-demographics distribution than is seen among American women's magazines. In the U. S. market, most of the nearly two dozen major women's magazines are clumped together. On the U. K. map, GH's positioning as an "upmarket" magazine is clear. On the U. S. map, GH appears in the middle of about 10 women's magazines with extremely similar reader demographics, and most are more down- than up-market.

Interviewing the Editors

When asked to describe the typical Good Housekeeping reader, editors in both countries offer a similar picture.[8] Diane Brown, senior articles editor for American GH, says her magazine's readers are "moms, Baby Boomers, many of

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[8] Quotes and information in this section are from personal communication with Pat Roberts Cairns, editor-in-chief, British GH, July 30, 1996; Hilary Robinson, features editor, British GH, July 30, 1996; Pat Shepherd, personal assistant to the editor, British GH, July 30, 1996; Diane Brown, senior articles editor, American GH, June 12, 1996; and Rosemary Leonard, reader services editor, American GH, June 6, 1996.

whom work outside the home, conservative in taste and lifestyle, concerned about family issues." Pat Roberts Cairns, editor-in-chief of British GH, describes a woman in her forties who is "very self-assured, usually working outside the home" and yet is also from "Middle England," very mainstream. Cairns even uses the term "new traditionalist"--taken from an advertising campaign for American GH--to describe her modern British reader who nevertheless holds fast to traditions and whose relatively conservative values remain constant over time.

Both editors admit that they are trying to attract readers who are demographically appealing to advertisers--essentially, young and high-income--though American GH editors are more concerned about age, while British GH editors are more concerned about income and class. Brown, who considers the target American GH reader to be "35-to-40ish" rather than a woman in her mid-40s, notes that because of recent changes in editorial, "we're attracting a younger reader than, say, five or ten years ago." Cairns, meanwhile, stresses her readers' spending power and feels that age is a plus: "Our main reader is in her forties. Her children are grown and she has more time and money to spend on herself. She wants to make her home beautiful, to travel, to look good and live well."

The editors have somewhat different beliefs about what their readers want from the magazine. "We think of them as consumers who want help in evaluating health issues, products, and psychological advice," says Brown. The American readers want not only a great deal of useful information, she adds, but also entertainment and insights about well-known people, especially celebrities.

"[American] Good Housekeeping uses celebrities as a point of identification for readers--people they like and are curious about."

If celebrities are an editorial offering that unifies American readers, they perform the opposite function in Britain, where, says Cairns, celebrities tend to alienate certain readers while appealing to others. Because the majority of copies of British GH are sold on the newsstand, putting celebrities (the British editors call them "personalities") on the cover or featuring them prominently in the magazine is too risky. "If [the reader] likes the personality, that's fine, but if she doesn't, she won't pick up the magazine," Cairns explains.

"That's also not what she buys us for," she adds. "Our reader doesn't want to read about other people; she wants to read about herself, her life. The main 'personality' in Good Housekeeping is the reader herself." For that reason, British GH uses models--attractive women who appear "happy, contented, relaxed, and friendly"--on the cover "to represent the reader."

This self-focus is also the reason for British GH's emphasis on personal, quality-of-life topics such as entertaining, food, decorating, fashion, and travel. Hilary Robinson, features editor of British GH, notes that her magazine is less information-driven than American GH. Adds Cairns: "We recognize that the reader is getting information from other sources. We try to focus on her lifestyle in a much broader way." (The lifestyle focus of British GH, says Cairns, also separates it and the other women's glossies from the information- and celebrity-gossip-filled women's weeklies in the UK: "They're really a different market.")

The importance of the reader is a topic to which editors on both sides of the Atlantic return and return as they describes their publications' editorial missions. Magazine historian Agnes Hooper Gottlieb has attributed GH's lasting success to the fact "that, despite its huge circulation, Good Housekeeping [has] maintained an intimate relationship with readers" (1995, p. 125). Conversations with current editors confirm this assessment. British GH publishes a quarterly, two-page newsletter that is inserted into subscriber's copies of the magazine and publicizes upcoming "special events." (A recent example was an evening reception for GH readers at the National Gallery of Art in London). The British editors also travel throughout the UK to conduct focus groups with readers. Since September 1995, the American editors have been reaching out to readers electronically via the Good Housekeeping site on Hearst's "HomeArts" homepage on the World Wide Web.

Nevertheless, handwritten letters are still the main form of communication between readers and editors, and the editors take this form of input seriously. At both magazines, all reader letters are answered, and many are quoted in editorial meetings as well as in the pages of the magazines. American GH receives about 1,000 pieces of reader mail per month, while British GH gets about 600. Most letters are written in response to the magazine's content, although a large portion are general requests for help and information. In both countries, the most common topic of reader letters is health and medical issues.

The editors talk about research and letters as tools with which they can build a relationship with readers (and, as British Marketing Strategies Manager Sue

Coffin [1996] points out, that relationship is what advertisers are actually buying when they purchase space in the magazine). Both American and British GH editors think of themselves as typical of the reader. Noting that most of the editors at American GH are women in their forties, Brown admits that "an editor's own personal experiences sometimes count as a 'real life' source for articles."

Her counterpart in the UK, Hilary Robinson, agrees. "We have to care about what we put in the magazine, care about it on a gut level, because that's what the reader needs," the features editor says. "There has to be emotion, and we have to feel it."

Reading the Magazines

A close reading of 12 consecutive issues of both American and British Good Housekeeping, the October 1995 through September 1996 issues, provides evidence for the editors' remarks. Moreover, it reveals several content differences that stem from the economic and cultural factors--from delivery systems to audience demographics--discussed in the sections above. The specific details of this content analysis are contained in Tables A1 and A2 (Appendix A).

Issue Size and Editorial Pages

Both magazines give their readers a great deal of editorial. Despite its smaller circulation, UK GH is a slightly larger magazine than its American counterpart, in terms of both actual magazine size (the British version is somewhat oversize, with about one-half inch extra in length and width) and page length. The

average issue size in this study was 248 pages for UK GH and 209 pages for U. S. GK, though the American magazines had a greater proportion of editorial versus advertising pages. Only the American edition has an editorial "well"--a middle section of editorial uninterrupted by ads--although British GH makes frequent use of editorial spreads and runs features (e.g., fashion) that occupy up to 12 consecutive pages.

The Cover

With the exception of the magazines' December 1995 issues, both of which showed unpeopled Christmas scenes at home, the cover photograph featured models on all issues of British GH and movie and/or television celebrities[9] on all issues of American GH. Coverlines revealed editorial emphases that mirrored the differences inside the magazine, discussed further in the section below: in British GH, a heavier emphasis on fashion, decorating, and entertaining; in American GH, a heavier emphasis on celebrities and useful information, especially advice on health and medicine. The distribution of coverline topics for the year's worth of both editions of the magazine is shown in Table A3 (Appendix A).

Each issue's lead coverline--the one appearing directly under the title and on the left side--is particularly telling about contrasts in the magazines' content. Of the dozen American GH issues examined, eight had lead coverlines about dieting,

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[9] In order, from October 1995 to September 1996 (skipping December): Oprah Winfrey; Loni Anderson; Candice Bergen; Mary Hart and son; Sally Field; Joan Lunden; Kim Basinger and Alec Baldwin; Christopher Reeve and wife; Goldie Hawn; Katie Couric, and Kathie Lee Gifford and daughter.

and three were about medical issues, suggesting the strong service-and-information focus Diane Brown describes. Most of the lead coverlines on British GH reflect the lifestyle focus Cairns mentions: beauty and fashion (four), food for entertaining (three), and home-decorating (two).[10]

Editorial Content: The Differences

In keeping with its cover emphasis on celebrities, American GH carries more than double the amount of editorial focusing on celebrities and entertainment, and it does longer features in this area, while British GH runs a variety of short features reviewing entertainment but few profiles of celebrities. American GH is also full of practical information on health and medical issues (101 pages during 12 months, versus 53 pages in UK GH), parenting and family advice (82 vs. 47 pages), diet and exercise (57 vs. 28 pages), financial advice (41 vs. 3 pages), and crime-prevention and safety advice (31 vs. 0 pages).

British GH is more focused on the reader's own lifestyle and home. In terms of lifestyle editorial, it contains more beauty features (104 vs. 67 pages) and four times more fashion coverage (227 vs. 57 pages) than American GH. The "upmarket" nature of the British GH readership is evident in the magazine's emphasis on another lifestyle topic, travel (63 pages vs. 8 in U. S. GH): like its fashion pages, the travel pages in UK GH suggest that the reader has a good deal of money to spend on herself. So does the magazine's home-decorating coverage, a major focus

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[10] Of the rest, one was on dieting, one was seasonal to Christmas, and one was a generalized promotion for the magazine itself. The American exception was also a seasonal (Christmas) coverline.

of British GH (217 pages) but only of minor interest in American GH (27 pages). Gardening is also a higher priority in the UK edition (50 pages) and of virtually no interest (one page during an entire year) in the U. S.

The editorial category to which the magazines devote the most space is the same in both countries: food. Yet food is more dominant in British GH (254 pages), which includes a wider variety of gourmet dishes and treats food as a form of entertainment (a lifestyle emphasis), while U. S. GH (189 pages) covers food in a more family-oriented, instructional (information-driven) way.

The tone of each magazine's articles also reflects what the editors describe as their different priorities. Articles in U. S. GH are more tightly-written and tightly-edited (shorter sentences and paragraphs, direct in making their points) and full of information. Many articles in UK GH are chattier in tone and more indirect in topic; the writers often take longer to get to the point. A read through British GH is also, to use UK Features Editor Hilary Robinson's word, a "lighter" experience than a read through its U. S. counterpart. The U. S. edition is more likely to carry stories about women who have faced serious social, economic, and political problems (such as sexual harassment, poverty, racism, educational challenges, crime, etc.). For example, during the year surveyed, American GH ran 88 pages of such stories, while British GH devoted only 9 pages to this sort of editorial.

Not all results of this content analysis support the editors' characterizations of U. S. GH as essentially a service magazine and UK GH as essentially a lifestyle magazine. Two categories that would seem to be more about lifestyle and

introspection, and less concerned with the "how-to" nature of service material, are in fact a greater priority in the U. S. edition. Etiquette is covered monthly in the U. S. but not at all in the UK.[11] And fiction receives an enormous amount of space in American GH (161 pages in a year), compared to relatively little space in British GH (38 pages).

Conversely, contests, a "service" topic in that they provide a payoff of prizes or cash, are a fixture of British GH (28 contests occupying 44 pages) but are used less by American GH (6 contests on 10 pages). However, the British contests--with prizes including trips to the French Riviera, Australia, and California, a garden conservatory worth £20,000, and several new cars--can be seen as consistent with Pat Roberts Cairns' editorial philosophy, her interest in affirming upscale lifestyle choices and increasing readers' sense of involvement in the magazine.

Editorial Content: The Similarities

While noting the content differences between the American and British editions of GH, it is also important to consider their similarities. Neither are greatly concerned with politics or work issues, and both place a similarly moderate emphasis on categories such as sex and marriage, psychology and self-help, and essays and humor. Both American and British GH include regular editorial matter featuring the staff of their respective versions of the Good Housekeeping Institute, on-site research facilities where experts evaluate consumer products (on which they

[11] This discrepancy that may reflect cultural differences, a longer tradition and clearer consensus about manners in the UK that have never fully emerged in the U. S.

bestow the Good Housekeeping Seal) and give home-care advice. Finally, the overall editorial mix--the variety and types of subjects covered in Good Housekeeping--is essentially the same in both countries.[12]

Another similarity is the personal style and approach evident in so many editorial features. Both magazines regularly carry features and essays written in the first person, as if they are conversations with the reader.[13] Readers' stories, voices, and photographs are included not only in letters-to-the-editor pages but also in articles and features. "This use of real people," writes women's-magazine scholar Marjorie Ferguson, "is intended to make the reader feel that there are aspects of these individuals' lives that correspond with hers" (1982, p. 166). Here are just a few of many examples from the Good Housekeeping issues studied:

* the July American GH carried a roundtable discussion in which First Lady Hilary Clinton spoke with eight GH readers about their concerns for their children's futures;

* the December American GH continued a five-year tradition of printing readers' favorite holiday memories;

* several issues of British GH included a page called "Where Are They

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[12] However, coverage is more evenly distributed among the various topic categories in American GH, while British GH devotes nearly half--48 percent--of all editorial pages to just three categories: fashion, decorating, and food.

[13] During the 12 months surveyed, American GH ran 38 articles and columns using the first-person voice, and British GH ran 33. Regular columnists during this time included UK humorist Maureen Lipman, U. S. essayists Lois Wyse and Peggy Noonan, and the late U. S. humorist Erma Bombeck.

Now?" with readers' requests for information about long-lost relatives and friends, and the February issue reported happy reunions that resulted from this; and

* a feature in the December British GH (titled "Women Like You!") described the readers who had been chosen by the magazine's editors as "Women of the 90s," an awards program designed to "celebrate Britain's 'silent successes'--the women who quietly and effectively get on with holding down rewarding jobs in or outside the home, meeting challenging commitments, and creating a happy, balanced home life" (p. 123).

Each magazine features a front-of-the-book editor's page, on which the editor in chief is shown smiling in a photograph and speaks to the reader in the first person, often including personal information about herself and her staff. On these pages, American editor Ellen Levine and British editor Pat Roberts Cairns explain to the reader what features are in the issue and why they were chosen.

Editors' pages have attracted considerable attention from scholars studying British women's magazines. Historian Margaret Beetham considers them "a feminised space" in journalism (1996, p. 3). Marjorie Ferguson calls the language employed in this space "write-speak," a "sisterly, companionable tone of voice" that "conveys a sense of belonging and group membership" (1982, p. 165). Janice Winship notes that editors' pages often "adopt the style of a friendly letter" in an effort to "establish a personal relationship" with the readers (1987, p. 66). Historian Irene Dancyger believes that readers try to discover "the personality of the editor" because they are "looking for a friend" in their magazines (1978, p. 2).

All of these characterizations are confirmed by the editor's page run by Pat Roberts Cairns in the February British GH, her first issue after replacing Sally O'Sullivan as editor-in-chief. As she took over at the helm, Cairns appealed to, and reassured, her readers, writing to them as she would to a respected friend:

> There are many ideas I want to bring to you each month and recent research tells me what you enjoy most from our pages. All favourites will stay and we'll create some new features in response to all you have told us. Few of us have time to write letters these days, but I would love to hear about anything that pleases, concerns or interests you in Good Housekeeping. It's written and produced for you and we always listen (p. 4).

Discussion

The personal nature of editorial matter, the editors' commitment to reader involvement, and the editorial mix are significant similarities between American and British Good Housekeeping--and one would expect similarities with such a well-known, shared title. Yet this study reveals striking variations, too, that make it clear that this is not the "same" magazine in the UK as it is in the U. S.

American GH positions itself as a service and entertainment magazine, while British GH positions itself as a lifestyle magazine. One uses the image of celebrity to sell copies, while the other uses the "everywoman" image of the reader to attract

purchasers. The editors' philosophies and the editorial content of both magazines confirm these contrasts. For both magazines, there is an inverse relationship between circulation and demographics: the very "upmarket" British edition has a relatively small audience, while the somewhat downmarket American edition has a huge readership.

In these differences lie themes for future research. One such study might explore the possibility that an international edition's audience potential and its positioning as "upmarket" or "downmarket" may have less to do with the character of the parent medium than with the existing competitive media market in the country of publication. Another might question why there is no correspondingly healthy market in the U.S.--a country with a much larger female audience base--for the women's weeklies that thrive in Britain. The findings of this study also raise broader questions. For instance, how does population concentration affect media distribution and audiences' buying decisions? How does the cultural significance of audience demographics--both industry and societal perceptions of "quality" media consumers--vary from one country to another?

Indeed, aside from its descriptive function with regard to Good Housekeeping, this case study may raise as many questions as it answers. It does make clear, however, how great a role the home country--its culture, its geography, and its business marketplace--may play in the shaping the character and the viability of international versions of American magazines.

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Appendix A: Content Analysis of American and British Good Housekeeping

Coding Key

"Celebrities & Entertainment" includes both celebrity profiles and reviews of entertainment events and products (the latter more typical of British than American GH).

"Parenting & Family Issues" includes service and issue-related stories about raising children, children's education, and relationships with parents and siblings.

"Women's Success & Courage" includes issue-related articles about ordinary women. In some cases when a woman's success or courage was the focus of the article--the reason it was published--the article was put into this category rather than another also-appropriate one. For instance, in the February British GH, a first-person story by a woman who was planning her family's future while she was dying of ovarian cancer went into this category rather "Health & Medical."

"Politics" includes features about not only politicians (such as the interview with President Bill Clinton in the November American GH and the November British GH feature on women in Parliament), but also the wives of politicians (such as Hilary Clinton's roundtable discussion with reader in the July U. S. GH and an interview with former First Lady Barbara Bush in the April U. S. GH).

"Product & Shopping Information" includes buying advice on specific consumer products not covered under other categories (i. e., shopping advice on

beauty products, given on the beauty page, would be counted in the beauty category, not this one). Examples of what does fit into this category are the regular appliance-information features supplied by the Good Housekeeping Institute editors in both countries, as well as a section listing product recalls published in American GH and a back-of-the-book "Your Shopping Guide" that appears monthly in British GH and refers to items in its editorial pages.

"Other" includes editorial that does not fit into the listed categories. Examples include articles about pets; automotive advice; a feature explaining what the [British] GH Institute does; a recurring feature in British GH listing readers who are looking for lost friends and relatives ("Where Are They Now?"); advice on handling disputes with neighbors; some seasonal (Christmas) editorial (such as articles about angels in both the British and American December issues); and the "Most Admired Women/Men" polls and results in American GH.

"General editorial" includes the cover, editor's page, table of contents, masthead, letters to the editor, Good Housekeeping Seal guarantee, and promotions of future months' contents.

Other categories should be self-explanatory.

Table A1

Editorial Breakdown for American GH, October 1995-September 1996

Editorial Categories	Number of articles	Number of pages
Celebrities & Entertainment	19	65
Sex & Marriage	14	34
Psychology & Self-help	25	40
Health & Medical	54	101
Parenting & Family Issues	37	82
Beauty	33	67
Fashion	21	57
Decorating	7	27
Gardening	1	1
Needlework & Crafts	8	15
Diet (Nutrition) & Exercise	27	57
Other Food	65	189
Work Issues	2	5
Money Advice	29	41
Etiquette	12	14
Essays & Humor	30	32
Fiction	20	161
Women's Success & Courage	61	88
Product & Shopping Info.	39	46
Household Care	22	20
Politics	4	10
Travel	11	8
Crime & Safety	23	31
Contests	6	10
Horoscope	0	0
Other	28	30
General Editorial	71	79

Total Pages*: 2504
Total Numbered Pages (incl. covers): 2384
Total Editorial Pages: 1310
Average Editorial Pages per Issue: 109
Total Ad Pages: 1194
Average Ad Pages per Issue: 100
Edit to ad ratio: 1.09 (52% editorial; 48% advertising)
Average Issue Size (using total pages count) -- 209

* Pages counts are rounded off to the nearest page. Total pages exceed numbered pages because the magazines include non-numbered pages of advertising.

Table A2

Editorial Breakdown for British GH, October 1995-September 1996

Editorial Categories	Number of articles	Number of pages
Celebrities & Entertainment	15	32
Sex & Marriage	9	25
Psychology & Self-help	19	32
Health & Medical	34	53
Parenting & Family Issues	24	47
Beauty	38	104
Fashion	63	227
Decorating	71	217
Gardening	22	50
Needlework & Crafts	0	0
Diet (Nutrition) & Exercise	10	28
Other Food	104	254
Work Issues	2	7
Money Advice	2	3
Etiquette	0	0
Essays & Humor	25	26
Fiction	13	38
Women's Success & Courage	4	9
Product & Shopping Info.	45	60
Household Care	9	10
Politics	1	4
Travel	33	63
Crime & Safety	0	0
Contests	28	44
Horoscope	13	21
Other	17	34
General Editorial	72	70

Total Pages*: 2980
Total Numbered Pages (incl. covers): 2916
Total Editorial Pages: 1458
Average Editorial Pages per Issue: 122
Total Ad Pages: 1518
Average Ad Pages per Issue: 126
Edit to ad ratio: 0.97 (49% editorial; 51% advertising)
Average Issue Size (using total pages count) -- 248

* Pages counts are rounded off to the nearest page. Total pages exceed numbered pages because the magazines include non-numbered pages of advertising.

Table A3

Subjects of Coverlines, American and British GH, October 1995-September 1996

Coverline Categories	American GH	British GH
Diet & Exercise	9	3
Other food	9	14
Health & Medical	20	5
Decorating & Gardening		8
Money/Savings	6	4
Celebrities	12	1
Politics	2	
Fiction	2	1
Beauty & Fashion	8	13
Marriage (incl. sex)	6	8
Parenting & Family	4	5
Other Psych./Self-help	5	3
Work issues		3
Etiquette	1	
Crime/Safety	2	
Travel		3
Contests	1	14
Product/Shopping info.		9
Other *	6	5

* In October American GH, an excerpt from an Erma Bombeck humor book; in January American GH, a home care feature by Heloise; in April British GH, a solicitation for reader's contributions to a cancer fund; in January British GH, a general promotion ("More Ideas! Great Tips! Fantastic Value!") and a piece on astrological predictions for personal wealth; in July American GH, a tribute to the late columnist Bombeck. Also, seasonal (Christmas) coverlines not fitting into any other category.

Appendix B: Circulation and Reader Demographics

Table B1

Top 20 U. S. and UK Women's Magazines, by Paid Circulation

U.S. Magazine	Paid Circulation	UK Magazine	Paid Circulation
Better Homes & Gardens	7,567,000	Take a Break (W)	1,458,950
Good Housekeeping	5,068,000	Bella (W)	831,596
Ladies' Home Journal	5,054,000	Woman (W)	800,099
Family Circle	5,017,000	Woman's Weekly (W)	754,110
McCall's	4,644,000	Best (W)	565,388
Woman's Day	4,501,000	Prima	550,692
Redbook	3,222,000	Good Housekeeping	488,243
Cosmopolitan	2,328,000	Cosmopolitan	456,394
Glamour	2,042,000	Marie Claire	452,521
Parents	1,894,000	Woman and Home	417,119
Mademoiselle	1,261,000	My Weekly (W)	402,588
New Woman	1,234,000	Essentials	328,528
Self	1,183,000	Woman's Realm (W)	307,237
First for Women	1,148,000	Family Circle	296,418
Woman's World (W)	1,110,000	Company	290,081
Parenting	1,090,000	New Woman	263,464
Vogue	1,025,000	She	252,046
Working Mother	921,000	Elle	205,511
Elle	873,000	Vogue	188,669
Working Woman	781,000		

Sources for data: Periodical Publishers Association, 1996; Mediamark Research, 1996. Weekly frequency is indicated by (W); other titles are monthlies. U. S. figures are rounded off to the nearest thousand. Data reflects 1995 sales, the latest complete figures relevant for the period of this study. Some magazines, including Good Housekeeping, currently have lower circulations because of lowered rate bases.

Table B2

U. S. and UK Women's Magazine Readership by Household Income and Social Grade, from Highest ("Upmarket") to Lowest ("Downmarket")

U.S. Magazine	Median HHI	UK Magazine	ABC1 readers (%age)
Self	$48,738	Company	74 %
Elle	$47,211	Good Housekeeping	72 %
Allure	$47,168	Marie Claire	72 %
Working Mother	$46,978	Cosmopolitan	71 %
Mademoiselle	$46,694	Harpers & Queen	71 %
Glamour	$46,331	She	67 %
Harper's Bazaar	$44,992	Woman and Home	66 %
Working Woman	$44,674	Vogue	65 %
Vogue	$44,242	New Woman	65 %
Cosmopolitan	$44,237	Essentials	60 %
First for Women	$43,850	Prima	56 %
Better Homes & Gardens	$41,933	Family Circle	56 %
New Woman	$41,775	Woman's Weekly (W)	45 %
Redbook	$41,146	Woman (W)	44 %
Parents	$39,369	Best (W)	44 %
Family Circle	$38,759	Woman's Realm (W)	43 %
Woman's Day	$38,463	Woman's Own (W)	42 %
Ladies' Home Journal	$38,442	Bella (W)	40 %
Good Housekeeping	$37,800	My Weekly (W)	40 %
Parenting	$37,237	Take a Break (W)	36 %
Woman's World (W)	$35,728		
McCall's	$33,823		

Sources for data: Periodical Publishers Association, 1996; Mediamark Research, 1996. Weekly frequency is indicated by (W); other titles are monthlies.

Table B3

Social-Grade Distribution among Women's Magazines in the United Kingdom:

UK Good Housekeeping, All UK Women's Monthlies, All UK Women's Weeklies

Social Grade	Good Housekeeping	Women's Monthlies	Women's Weeklies
AB	40 %	30 %	17 %
C1	32 %	32 %	28 %
C2	16 %	19 %	24 %
DE	12 %	19 %	32 %

Key:

AB = Upper-middle class and middle class: High and intermediate managerial, administrative, or professional.

C1 = Lower-middle class: Supervisory or clerical.

C2 = Upper-working class: Skilled manual labor.

DE = Lower-working class and less affluent: Semi- and unskilled manual labor and those living on pensions or other very low incomes.

Sources for data: Good Housekeeping Media Pack, 1996; Periodical Publishers Association, 1996. Source for grade definitions: Winship, 1987.

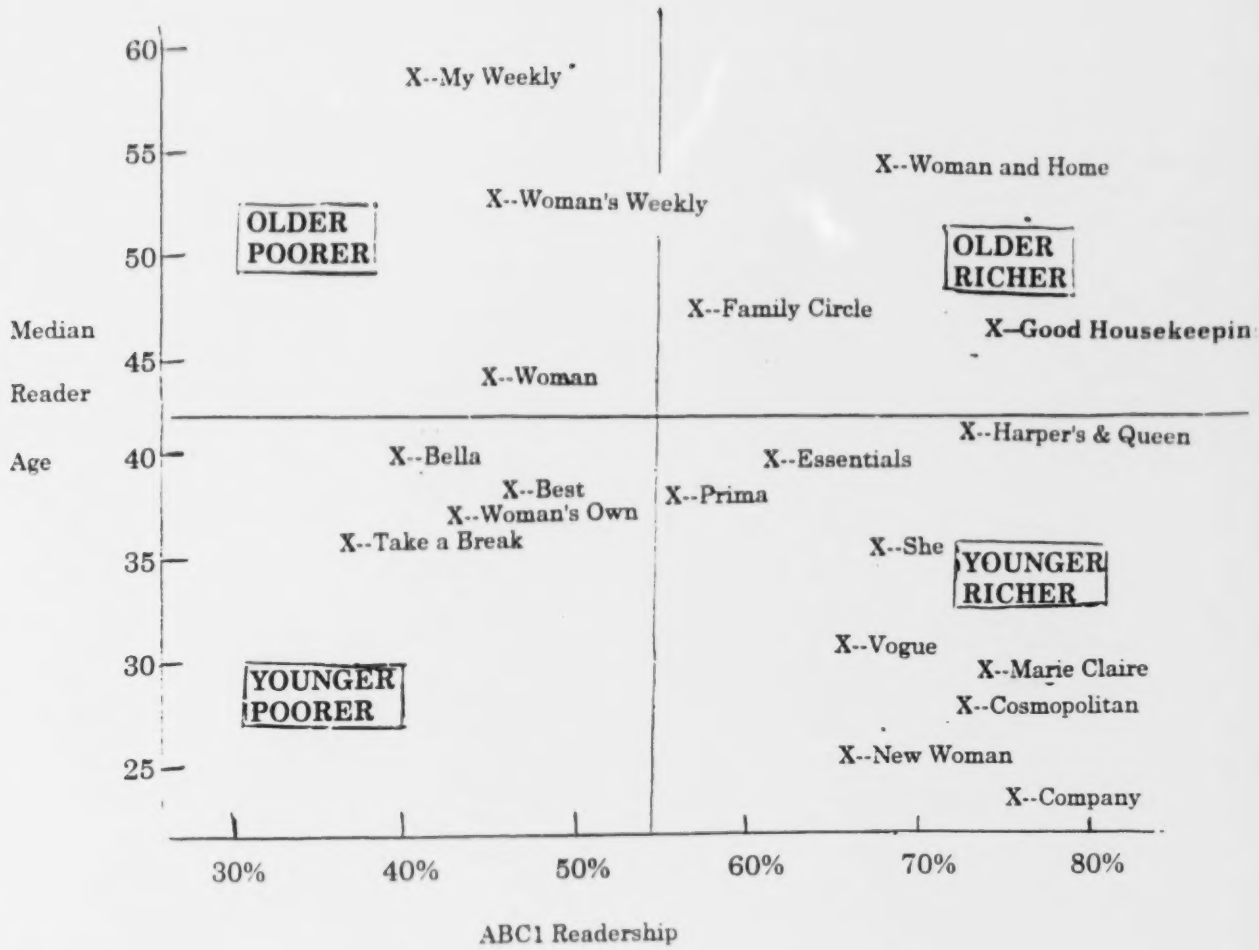
Table B4

U. S. and UK Women's Magazine Readership by Age, from Youngest to Oldest

U.S. Magazine	Median Age	UK Magazine	Median Age
Allure	27	Company	24
Mademoiselle	28	New Woman	27
Elle	29	Cosmopolitan	28
Cosmopolitan	31	Marie Claire	29
Vogue	31	Vogue	31
Parents	32	She	35
Parenting	32	Take a Break (W)	36
Self	32	Woman's Own (W)	37
Glamour	32	Best (W)	37
Working Mother	35	Woman (W)	38
Harper's Bazaar	36	Prima	38
New Woman	36	Essentials	38
First for Women	37	Bella (W)	40
Working Woman	39	Harpers & Queen	41
Redbook	41	Good Housekeeping	46
Better Homes & Gardens	43	Family Circle	47
Woman's World (W)	43	Woman's Weekly (W)	52
Good Housekeeping	44	Woman's Realm (W)	52
Woman's Day	44	Woman and Home	55
McCall's	45	My Weekly (W)	58
Family Circle	45		
Ladies' Home Journal	46		

Sources for data: National Magazine Company, Information Pack, 1996; Mediamark Research, 1996. Weekly frequency is indicated by (W); other titles are monthlies.

Figure B1



Caption for Figure B1. Distribution of UK women's magazine readers by age and class, defined as percentage of readers classified as "ABC1" by the National Readership Survey (UK). Sources for data: Periodical Publishers Association. 1996; National Magazine Company Information Pack. 1996. This figure is a reproduction of the "age-class" map" devised by Bird (1977).

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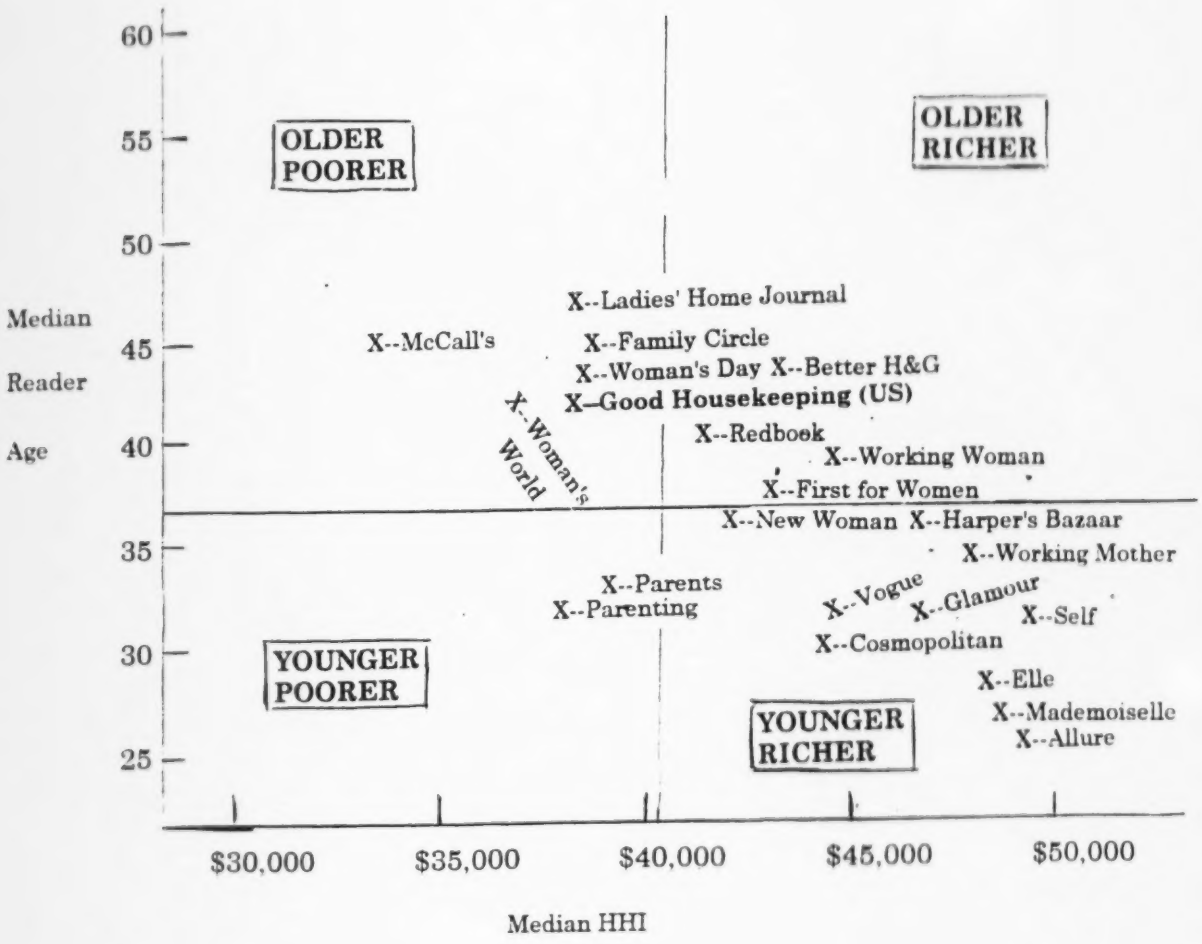
Figure B2



Caption for Figure B2. Distribution of U. S. women's magazine readers by age and median household income. Source for data: Mediamark Research, 1996. This figure is an adaptation of the "age-class map" devised by Bird (1977) for use in classifying British media audience demographics.

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How the Nineteenth Amendment
Was Framed in the Pages of the *Ladies' Home Journal*

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How the Nineteenth Amendment
Was Framed in the Pages of the *Ladies' Home Journal*

Framing theory says that information is presented and interpreted by using pre-existing structures that reside in the individual processing the information as well as in structures shared by the larger society. Such structures may be referred to as stereotypes, social scripts or cognitive maps but all refer to a categorization system an individual has that can and often does reflect the greater society.[1] Frames allow us "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" experience.[2] Media frames, which are "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, or selection, emphasis and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse whether verbal or visual," exists for all texts produced by the media.[3] Media frames are a "central organizing idea" that lead a media consumer toward a particular interpretation.[4] Through the repetitive use of keywords, analogies, symbols and images one interpretation – or frame – becomes dominant in the discourse.[5]

One frame that is pervasive in the secondary sources discussing the goal of the suffragists is that being part of the political process for suffragists meant voting, not running for office. The reported agenda of the suffragists was to win the vote to influence male politicians and to get referenda on the ballot for direct legislation.[6]

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[1] Robert H. Wicks and Dan G. Drew, "Learning from News: Effects of Message Consistency and Medium on Recall and Inference Making," **Journalism Quarterly**, 68 (1,2):155-164 .

[2] Erving Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), p. 21.

[3] Gitlin, Todd. **The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the New Left**. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 7.

[4] William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani , "The changing culture of affirmative action," **Research in Political Sociology**, 3 (1987):137-177.

[5] Robert M. Entman, "Framing U.S. Coverage of International News: Contrasts in Narratives of the KAL and Iran Air Incidents," Journal of Communication 41 (4):6-27 (Autumn, 1991).

[6] R. Darcy, Susan Welch, and Janet Clark, **Women, Elections, and Representation** (New York: Longman Press, 1987), p.10-11.

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It was not framed as women seeking public office, getting elected and being involved in the policy-making process.

The Nineteenth Amendment signaled the beginning of voting rights, both legal and sociological, for women in this country.[7] It has not been regarded as the beginning of women seeking political office – that appears to have begun in earnest with the onset of the modern day women's movement.[8] It was not until 1992, labeled as "The Year of the Woman" by the media, that nationally women ran in noticeable numbers as 1992 saw more women run for public office in the United States than ever in its history. [9]

The lack of parity between women and men in all levels of elected office suggests society has been more interested in having women vote than hold office. A seventy-two year hiatus between women winning the fight for enfranchisement and in a substantial number of women running for representatives in our national legislative bodies seems like ample evidence that women did just want the vote in 1920. But is that what coverage in the popular media of the time supported? How did a leading women's magazine of the day frame the issue of enfranchisement?

To answer some of these questions, all issues of the ***Ladies Home Journal*** were examined the year prior, the year of, and the year after the Nineteenth Amendment passed. A textual analysis was done on any non-fiction article – editorials, news stories, features and columns –that addressed women as political beings. A total of 41 stories were analyzed.

While women's magazines have not traditionally been political forums, they have had an important societal impact. The first women's magazine, ***Godey's Lady's***

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Michael X. Delli Carpini and Ester R. Fuchs, "The year of the woman? Candidates, voters, and the 1992 elections," **Political Science Quarterly**, Spring 1993, 108:1:29-36.

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Book, was edited by Sarah Josepha Hale. Hale, a strong advocate of women's education, did not believe women should vote until they were properly educated. The patterns of women's magazines began with ***Godey's Lady's Book*** and its editor Hale: advice on how to be a woman in society without directly or openly addressing the harder, dirtier issues, but, in fact, always skirting ever so politely around them.[10]

The ***Ladies' Home Journal*** was selected because it is the grand lady and historical leader in the category of women's magazines[11] It stands apart not only as the oldest of the Seven Sisters – the most notable of the women's magazines whose ranks include ***Better Homes and Gardens, Family Circle, Good Housekeeping, Ladies' Home Journal, McCall's, Redbook*** and ***Woman's Day***.[12] But the ***Ladies' Home Journal*** is a magazine consistently considered to be the industry's standard and not just delivering domestic fluff.[13] From its earliest days it published the words of such authors as Ruyard Kipling and Theodore Roosevelt, addressed such difficult social issues as syphilis and advocated sex education.[14] During the time period examined, it led the women's magazines in circulation which meant that it had the potential to influence more people with its content than its competition.[15] It was also selected because of the substantial number of male readers it had during this period: it was the third most requested magazine by the soldiers in World War I.[16]

In addition to having male readers, during the time period examined (and much of the magazine's publishing life), the magazine was edited by a man.[17]

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[10] Helen Woodward, The **Lady Persuaders** (New York, New York: Ivan Obolensky, Inc., 1960), p. 32-33.

[11] Ellen McCraken, "Service and Home: the Seven Sisters Adapt to the 1980s," **Decoding Women's Magazines**, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) pp. 173-174.

[12] John Vivian, "Magazines: An Innovative Medium," **The Media Of Mass Communication**, (Boston:Allyn and Bacon, 1993) p.69.

[13] John Tebbel and Mary Zuckerman, **The Magazine in America, 1741-1990** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 89-107.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Woodward, op. cit., p. 113.

[16] Ibid.

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This male influence, although not obvious in the pages of the magazine, may have had some influence on what was published about women's suffrage. The male influence reflecting the dominant ideology may not be readily evident in the pages of the magazine but it no doubt had an impact at a subtextual level.

Why didn't more women seek office after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment? Is it true that women wanted only the vote? Or was this the way a mainstream magazine framed the issue to make it more acceptable to the dominant culture?

Society may have warmed slowly to the idea of women as part of the political process because of the lack of Western cultural thought on the issue. Except for a small, finite number, political theorists did not write or speak about a political system that included a role of women. Women's political participation was a non-issue.[18] There have been some exceptions that did view women as potential political entities but few theorized women as political equals.

Many people have assumed that when people gathered at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 to discuss women's rights, that the resolution to enfranchise women was met with unanimous support. In fact, the resolution calling for women to secure the vote for themselves, was the only resolution in the ***Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions*** not to be unanimously adopted.[19] It was argued – or more accurately – feared that demanding the vote would overshadow other struggles for rights felt to be more rational and rights that seemed less "ridiculous."[20] The idea of women voting was foreign to women themselves. It was no wonder that the idea of full political participation was not a major consideration.

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[17] Woodward, op. cit., p. 63 - 101.

[18] Darcy, Welch, and Clark, op. cit. p. 2.

[19] Alice Rossi, ed., **The Feminist Papers: From Adams to De Beauvoir** (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 420.

[20] Ibid.

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About twenty years later, John Stuart Mill, in his book ***On the Subjection of Women***, argues not only for for female suffrage and female political participation, he argues that society would benefit from having women involved in the process. Without women involved he argues that society is only using half of its available resources.[21]

It was not that women's role in politics in this country was directly legally restricted: women were not explicitly barred from voting under the Constitution.[22] But because voter eligibility was left to the states, and most states carried property-based voting restrictions that women could not meet, the effect was women did not vote.[23] All states explicitly denied women the vote by 1807.[24] From 1869, when Wyoming was the first state to recognize the full political equality of women, until 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment passed, society hesitantly considered the idea of women being part of the political process.[25] But the idea of political participation was limited to women voting as evidenced by what the media of the day published.

After examining the issues of 1919, 1920 and 1921 some general patterns emerged. First, most of the magazine's discourse on the soon-to-be or newly enfranchised woman did address her role as a voter versus her role as a potential elected official. The act of voting was framed not as a great change that would transform the political climate of the country but as a continuation of the status quo. The status quo in this case was the white, Anglo-Saxon majority who felt African-Americans and European immigrants were becoming a threat to the American way of life. The January 1920 editorial titled "Nineteen-Twenty" reminds the reader who is

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[21] John Stuart Mill, **On liberty; Representative government; The subjection of women;– Three essays** (London, Oxford University Press:1933).

[22] Delli Carpini and Fuchs, op. cit., p. 29.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., p. 30.

[25] Ibid.

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allegedly responsible for the success of the country stating:

> The plain fact is that just as it was honest, intelligent, courageous men and women who three centuries ago, in 1620, arrived in New England, and the same sort who built our great republic and who saved it in the critical days of its youth, so it is their descendents who are called upon to preserve it for the future.[26]

Copy such as this was reminiscent of late suffrage rhetoric that advocated the vote of women to counter the vote of what was often termed 'other less desirable elements.'

The enfranchised woman is framed predominantly as a voter and not as candidate or office holder. In most references, the text talks about 'the new woman voter.' By labeling women as such, the idea of women as just voters is reinforced and, as witnessed in much of the discourse presented, the notion that women may seek office is marginalized. What is emphasized, sometimes rather subtly, is that women cannot fully participate in society and should turn to men for assistance. The November 1919 editorial "In Safe Hands" reminds women, "What she cannot do herself she can aid her husband, her brother, her son to do. And these days, she can advise her Congressman also."[27] In the August 1920 editorial we are told:

> Women who seek the ballot do so not so much by reason of the additional service they may render through suffrage as from a feeling that by exercise of the franchise they are taking their place beside the men in an act fundamental to good government.[28]

The idea that women have a prescribed role next to men is not surprising in a woman's magazine especially from this time period. But the connotation of this

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[26] Anon., "Nineteen-Twenty: An Editorial,"**Ladies' Home Journal**, January 1920.

[27] Edward W. Bok, "In Safe Hands," **Ladies' Home Journal**, November 1919.

[28] Anon., "Woman's Opportunity,"**Ladies' Home Journal**, August 1920.

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passage is that the vote of women is merely symbolic.

As if to further subjugate women to the role of voter, women as office holders are presented as something women do not want. The first paragraph of "Making Politics Safe for Democracy" reinforces this idea in its beginning. It opens: " "I haven't a lot of time to spare, and I don't want to go into politics as a career," says the new woman voter. "But I do want to do everything I ought to do in order to vote as a good citizen." "[29] Later in the article, the author reminds the reader, "Millions of just average women voters are in politics this day – as participants, not as critics. They have no particular political ambitions of their own to serve."[30] Here the text tells us that women are participants in the political system if they vote – the subtext is women need not hold office to be participating as citizens.

Much of the text examined saw the vote as a furthering of women's role in society as the purveyor of good moral character and protector of the socially weak or disadvantaged. It was through the ballot that women could affect greater change. In "Mrs. New Citizen," a March 1919 article, a passage reflects what women will be concerned with:

> It is an appreciation of what the woman vote means collectively as an influence in our democracy . . . , an influence that wants legislation each year to take into consideration not merely the arrangements of business, taxation and tariffs, public buildings, harbors and roads, which have been the principal occupation of our national legislature in the past, but the sociological and humanitarian facts of life – the improvement of living conditions and the public health, the welfare of men, women and children in health and right living as well as economic opportunity.[31]

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[29] Esther Everett Lape, "Making Politics Safe for Democracy," **Ladies' Home Journal**, April 1920.

[30] Ibid.

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In an article the next month, written by the suffragist Anna Howard Shaw, women are described as having an "altruistic desire to correct all wrongs."[32] This was a widely held belief, for in many articles one finds assertions such as "On moral issues the women vote independently – and always will."[33]

It was this issue of how women would vote that dominated much of the discourse prior to women getting to exercise their vote nationally. The subhead on the article "Mrs. New Citizen" asserts: "Ever a Mystery as a Woman, She is Now a Dark Puzzle as a Voter."[34] The subhead is more ominous than the article itself. The article rather objectively presents the fact that no precedent exists, and there are no rules to follow. Unlike the subhead's implications, the article discusses how women might vote and what strategies they may employ. It presents women's voting behavior as an unknown factor but not an undeterminable one. The question of how certain women will vote is reflected in articles such as "Does the Wife Vote Like Her Husband?"[35] and editorials such as the November 1919 one, "Safe Hands."[36] This editorial ponders, "The ballot, after long experiment, has been granted the American woman. . . . What will the American woman do with it?"[37]

Along with the question concerning how women would vote was the belief that women needed to be educated as voters. Many articles were dedicated to this education including:

"Madam, Meet Your Congressman," March 1920

"Making Politics Safe for Democracy," April 1920

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[31] David Lawrence, "Mrs. New Citizen," **Ladies' Home Journal**, March 1919.

[32] Anna Howard Shaw, "Two New Cabinet Members And an Assistant Secretary of Labor: A Woman," **Ladies' Home Journal**, April 1919.

[33] Marie Cecile Chomel, "Does the Wife Vote Like Her Husband?" **Ladies' Home Journal**, May 1919.

[34] Lawrence, op. cit.

[35] Chomel, op. cit.

[36] Edward W. Bok, "Safe Hands," **Ladies' Home Journal**, November 1919.

[37] Ibid.

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"The New Woman Voter and the Grand Old Parties," May 1920

"Congress as a First Aid to Housewives," May 1920

"I Have the Honor to Nominate," June 1920

"Congress and the President," August 1920

The purpose of these articles was to familiarize women with the system they would now be participating in. The practice of presenting articles that were politically educational in nature continued after women had begun to vote. A series in 1921 entitled "Practical Politics," still discusses how women should be educated as voters. As a reminder that women still very much retained a subordinate role in the public's eye is evidenced by presenting the following in the column:

> Professor James P. Porter, a psychologist connected with Clark University, recently made public the results of certain tests that he conducted to establish the relative intelligence of males and females. He found the males ranged from two to eight points higher in relative ability than females, although feminine scholastic averages were from two to three points higher than those of males. From which the somewhat astonishing conclusion is drawn that while females are psychologically less able than males, they make better use of their more limited talents.[38]

The author actually defends women and their abilities as voters and citizens in his columns, but, as evidenced above, not outside of the dominant discourse of the society.

As times goes on, there is noticeably less focus on women as the uneducated and unpredictable voter. What surfaces more and more, is the image of women as thinking voters and potential office holders. In the early coverage, the mere mention

[38] William A. Willis, "Practical Politics," **Ladies' Home Journal**, April 1921.

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of women wanting office was denied or framed in such a way that it was highly undesirable. Consider the fact that in "Mrs. New Citizen" the only reference to women holding office is the following: "Instead of voting for members of their own sex, women have at times pronounced their vehement disapproval of such tactics by leaving the woman candidate to run far behind in the race."[39]

By early 1920, the warning against women running for public office shifts to at least a minimal discussion about it and an acknowledgement that it is happening. In Esther Everett Lape's March 1920 article "What Do Women Want With the Vote?," she dedicates three full paragraphs to the acknowledgment that some women do want the vote so they can hold office. She refers to this group as small and purposeful; she frames the discussion in a respectful and almost sympathetic voice, unlike earlier mentions of the issue.

It seems that by the end of 1920, the magazine, and perhaps society in general, is more comfortable with women being enfranchised and actually poke fun at what some thought would happen if women got the vote. The December 1920 article "New Women Leaders in Politics" begins with such lightheartedness. It starts:

> At every stage of the struggle for woman suffrage the opponents of the cause held before the public eye a series of lurid pictures was always the same, The Deserted Home. The horrors of the deserted home, as thus forecast, took many forms. . . . The neglected American husband patiently fastening the rents of his garments with safety pins. Again we saw unwashed and unwatched children playing with matches. . . . Occasionally, when the opponents were very low in their minds, they showed us the forgotten baby, hungrily pulling at its empty bottle. Always, when these things happened, mother was at the polls, lost to every

[39] Lawrence, op. cit.

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> sense of duty in the orgy of casting her vote.[40]

This article dedicated to female political leaders does discuss some female candidates but political leaders has a much broader meaning than candidates or elected officials. It includes women active in their political parties and women who through their political action have driven unqualified or corrupt men from office. The article does a good job of showing the difference women can make politically. But, as if the article has been too competent at showing the success of women in politics, it ends with five prescriptions of how women should behave politically. All of them, from the first that implores women "to be as inconspicuous as possible" to the one that asserts "don't be one of the kicking minority," qualifies women's participation in politics under the maintenance of the status quo and the dominant ideology.[41]

By the time 1921 rolls around, there is an entire article dedicated to women seeking and holding office. In "Office and the Woman," author Elizabeth Jordan cites examples from newspaper headlines that women are indeed running for and being elected to public office. She writes of the irony of newspaper coverage discussing a female politician's interest in shopping for hats and not of the coverage of a male politician's interest outside of his official role.[42] She thoughtfully discusses the phenomenon where some states have questioned the legality of women holding office and have subsequently used the argument to bar women from office. Her article suggests a backlash for enfranchised women has begun, for she concludes her article with:

> It is idle to hope that the professional woman politician, who is bound to be one of the offshoots of women's enfranchisement, will be a wisely progressive, farsighted, self-less maker and

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[40] Elizabeth Jordan, "New Women Leaders in Politics," **Ladies' Home Journal**, December 1920.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Elizabeth Jordan, "Office and the Woman," **Ladies' Home Journal**, June 1921.

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> administrator of laws. It is not idle to believe, indeed to predict, that there will be comparatively few of her, and that when she appears her fellow women will be even quicker than the men to destroy the menace she represents.[43]

The excitement and possibility about women's enfranchisement that was evident in earlier coverage seems to dissipate, the backlash against women exercising their rights emerges. "Where Women in Politics Fail," by Margaret Woodrow Wilson, highly criticizes what women have done and want to do with their vote.[44] This article, published in September 1921, scolds women for wanting separate parties, for seeking office, and for not working beside the men to create a better country. The subtext in an article published in the same issue, "Practical Politics for Gentlewomen," is that a woman may not individually believe in suffrage – implying a gentlewomen won't – but because the nation does, voting is every woman's civic responsibility.[45] The article is not subtle. Early in the text it states, "It [the ballot] went along with the sword and the heavier businesses of building and protecting the nation. You would have no more asked for the vote than you would have asked for a chew of tobacco."[46] The 'you' being used is meant to imply women. The articles continues with how to make voting palatable to the gentlewoman.

Overall, the examined coverage seems to support the theory that the media necessarily reflect the society and culture they operate in. Almost all of the coverage supports the dominant thoughts that were associated suffrage: giving educated, white women the vote would counter the votes of the African-American and immigrant voter; the woman voter would guide the country in the morally correct direction; and

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Margaret Woodrow Wilson, "Where Women in Politics Fail," **Ladies' Home Journal**, September 1921.

[45] Corra Harris, "Practical Politics for Gentlewomen," **Ladies' Home Journal**, September 1921.

[46] Ibid.

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that women wanted to participate in their government by voting and not by holding office. The idea that women should be able to vote because women should be equal with men was a miniscule part of the discourse. It may be because women won the vote on grounds other than equality that women holding office was such a minor part of the discourse.

What is clear is that people who believed in the full political equality of women were in the minority. The pages of the ***Ladies' Home Journal***, as one of the most successful popular magazines in 1919, 1920, and 1921, lend proof that those who believed in the full political equality of women were marginalized and ridiculed for their beliefs.

• AEJMC Convention 1997 •
• Magazine Division •

Risking Official Displeasure: The Trial and Tribulations of India's First Newsweekly in 1780

A paper submitted for consideration by the Magazine Division, 80th annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, July 30 - August 2, 1997, in Chicago, Illinois.

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Risking Official Displeasure: The Trial and Tribulations of India's First Newsweekly in 1780

Abstract

James Augustus Hicky published India's first newsweekly, the Bengal Gazette or the Calcutta General Advertiser in 1780. This paper narrates little-known facts about Hicky's journalistic career, the influence of his newsweekly on society and other issues not probed by earlier researchers.

An expatriate Irishman and a fiercely independent journalist, Hicky quickly realized that truly distinguished newsweeklies should serve society, even at the risk of official displeasure. Hicky's newsweekly made interesting reading with its ample dose of scurrilous reporting, risqué advertisements reflecting the low morality in society, and scandalous accounts of the misdeeds of British administrators in India.

Soon enough, the British rulers charged him of libel. Hicky was harassed, attacked and jailed. Undaunted, Hicky continued to edit his newsweekly from prison. But his publication did not survive long and the British rulers caused him immense harm and Hicky died a pauper.

Risking Official Displeasure: The Trial and Tribulations of India's First Newsweekly in 1780

"It is the strangest of all government, but it is designed for the strangest of all empires."

Maculay, 1833

The British conquest of India in the late eighteenth century was the realization of the English dream of a mercantile empire. By the 1760s, Britain's East India Company was the ruler of Bengal and firmly lodged in the southern coastal region. Through further conquest, the East India Company[1] extended its grip on the whole country and in later years it was gradually relieved of its trading privileges in the East. It was replaced with the royal stamp of England.

The Queen signed the charter "Elizabeth", assigning a monopoly to the "Honourable [sic] East India Company"[2] and thus the Company's Indian empire grew to be a paramount power in India[3], responsible for the government of an immense area.[4] A government which through might of arms, was the most powerful in Asia[5]; a government, the revenue of which was greater than that of Britain[6]; a government which ruled more people than the present government of the United States; a government owned by businessmen, the shares in which were daily bought and sold.[7]

Despite such hectic business activity in the mid-1760s[8], there was no newsweekly in Calcutta[9], the seat of the government for many years and

second only to London in the British Empire.[10] The first attempt to start a newsweekly in Calcutta was made in 1768 by William Bolts who had resigned from the Company's service earlier that year after censure by the court of Directors for private trade while under the Company's authority. In an announcement to notify his intentions, Bolts said he had "in manuscript many things to communicate which most intimately concerned every individual", and evidently gave rise to alarm in official circles.[11] He was immediately directed to quit Bengal and deported to Europe.[12]

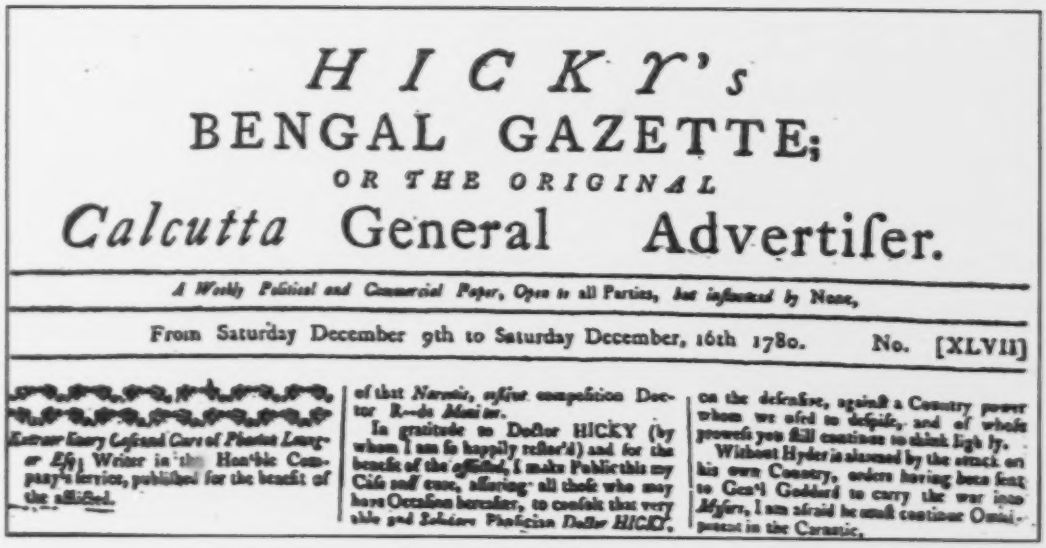
No attempt was made to emulate Bolt's example for a few years until January 29, 1780 when an expatriate Irishman, James Augustus Hicky, who described himself as "the first and the late printer to the Honourable Company", started India's first English newsweekly. Entitled Bengal Gazette or The Calcutta General Advertiser,[13] this journal became known as Hicky's Gazette. The birth of India's first newsweekly was under such fortuitous circumstances. It remains still a mystery as to how Hicky succeeded in securing permission to start a press and a newsweekly when administrators were afraid of newsweeklies.

This paper attempts to explore little-known facts about Hicky's journalistic career, the influence of his newsweekly and other issues not probed by earlier historians and writers who have studied Hicky. Previous studies such as Margarita Barns' The Indian Press[14] and J. Natarajan's History of Indian Journalism[15] describe the birth of India's first newsweekly in 1780 but they do not cover how Hicky considered the liberty of the press to be the very existence of an Englishman and went to prison rather than abandon that belief.[16] P. Thankappan Nair's A History of the Calcutta Press[17] has extensive biographical details about Hicky, but ignores the political background of Hicky's journalistic activities and fails to mention many interesting details

highlighted in this paper. Dr. H. E. Busteed's classical work, The Echoes from Old Calcutta and Mohit Mitra's A History of Indian Journalism[18] are broad in scope. Therefore, they are short on details and avoid analyzing both the content and political background of Hicky's role.

Drawing upon writings, letters and available court records, this paper examines Hicky's role as an advocate of the freedom of the press and his conflict and confrontation with British administrators in India whom he accused of misusing power. Set largely on a little-visited corner of colonial journalism between 1780 to 1800 in India, this paper profiles the pioneer of the English press in India and covers a) interesting details about the content of Hicky's Gazette; b) the political background of Hicky's journalism, especially his struggle against Governor-General Warren Hastings; c) how Hicky's newsweekly mirrored the social mores of the British rulers in India; and, d) records the impediments he faced in the course of publishing the Gazette, which he continued to edit from prison. The methodology consisted of systematically reading and analyzing Hicky's letters and his writings in the Gazette through which his role as a journalist becomes more explicit.

The available material on Hicky at the British Museum and India Office in London, and in particular at the National Library in Calcutta, is extraordinarily voluminous. A partial bibliography is appended, but the author thinks it is also necessary and useful to add that much of the unprinted material consulted by the author at the India Office in London and National Library, Calcutta, has not been previously used for research work. Much new and previously unknown material has been drawn upon for account. This paper has grown out of an attempt to document Hicky's career as a pioneer of the press in India. A facsimile of Hicky's Gazette appears on the next page (see **Illustration # 1 and # 2**).



HICKY's BENGAL GAZETTE;

OR THE ORIGINAL

Calcutta General Advertiser.

A Weekly Political and Commercial Paper, Open to all Parties, but influenced by None,

From Saturday December 9th to Saturday December, 16th 1780. No. [XLVII]

Lecturer Every Celebrated Cure of Phantom Lunger or Ely[illegible] Writer in the Honble Company's service, published for the benefit of the afflicted.

of that *Narratic, ossifier compulsion* Doctor R--ds *Monitor*.

In gratitude to Doctor HICKY (by whom I am so happily relieve'd) and for the benefit of the *afflicted*, I make Public this my Case and cure, offering all those who may have Occasion hereafter, to consult that very able and *Solicitous* Physician *Doctor HICKY*.

on the defensive, against a Country power whom we used to despise, and of whose prowess you still continue to think high ly.

Without Hyder is alarmed by the attack on his own Country, orders having been sent to Gen'l Goddard to carry the war into *Mysore*, I am afraid he will continue Omnipotent in the Carnatic.

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Illustration #1: Facsimile of Hicky's Gazette of December 1780

HICKY'S

BENGAL GAZETTE:

OR,

Calcutta General Advertifer.

Saturday January the 29th, 1780. [No. I.]

Illustration #2: Hicky's Gazette of January 29, 1780

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Hicky's Gazette

As Hicky conceived of the paper, its primary task was to supply news of trade and commerce, to act as an advertising medium and to publish literary material. Two years before starting his newsweekly, Hicky, who worked as a clerk in the Company's Western circuit, had set up a printing press of his own in Calcutta (after having spent some time in jail for non-payment of his debts) and printed some Council proceedings relating to regulations for the army. Hicky was a printer by trade and in setting out the prospectus of the newsweekly, Hicky explained:

> "I have no particular passion for printing of newspapers, I have no propensity: I was not bred to a slavish life of hard work, yet I take pleasure in enslaving my body in order to purchase freedom of my mind and soul."[19]

This somewhat florid phraseology is typical of Hicky's style as expressed in the columns of the Gazette.[20] The life of Hicky is a story of fantastic endeavor, and that of Hicky's Gazette as India's first English newsweekly has a special attraction of its own (See **Appendix** for Chronology of Events).

Hicky's Gazette consisted of only two sheets about twelve inches by eight with three narrow columns of letter-press text on each page.[21] It was published every Saturday. A single copy of the Gazette was priced at one rupee (3.3 cents) and the annual subscription was fifty rupees ($ 1.5). Hicky's Gazette was not deficient in the display of editorials and advertisements. There were no leaders or editorials, but letters to the editor, poems, skits, and other interesting items were regular features. Display of news and advertisements were confined to single columns. The front page was seldom given to commercial advertisements. Hicky specialized in giving more local news and gossip. In unavoidable circumstances, he used to reprint verbatim

lengthy six-month-old items from European papers. The rates for advertisements are not on record as there was no rate card. Hicky, being a commercial printer, had a variety of types and borders at his disposal and the Gazette, though with display of news not according to the modern standards, was not at all drab on that account. A drop letter was used for beginning any item, whether it was an advertisement or a news item. News items were separated from advertisements by ornamented borders and the advertisements by thin rules.[22]

Risqué advertisements: Selling Sex and Sin

Much space was devoted to advertisements, it included comments on the private affairs of individuals which caused considerable annoyance. Hicky's Gazette was decried as vile, scurrilous and abusive print. Hicky was characterized as the most objectionable rowdy that ever landed in Calcutta. In sharp contrast to the prudery and moral strictness of the Victorian age in England, the English colonists in India had different moral standards. Some of the advertisements in Hicky's *Gazette* contained *double entendre* :

> Wanted two Coffrees who can play well on the French horn and otherwise hardy and useful about a house relative to the business of consumce (Khansama) or that of a cook, they must not be fond of liquor. Any person or persons having such to dispose of will be treated with by applying to the printer, Hicky's Gazette.

There were other advertisements which gave credence to the widespread depravity among the English community :

> Wanted by a gentleman, now in Calcutta, two very handsome African ladies of true sable hue, by the vulgar commonly called Coffrees. They must not be younger than 14 years each, not older than 20 to 25. They must be well-grown girls of their age, straight limed and straight-eyed and have rational use of all

> faculties – the better of (if) a little squeamish. But beware of spot or blemish. They will be joined in the Holy Banns of Wedlock to two gentlemen of their own colour, [sic] caste and country. A dowry[23] is not expected with them. As the master of these African gentlemen would not wish to have been disappointed, he hopes no ladies will apply but those who are really and truly spinsters.

Mirror of the Society : Exposing Low Morality

Hicky's newsweekly was the mirror of the age. It was published mainly for the British residents of the settlement who were corrupt to the core.[24] Scandals that rocked Calcutta during the days of Warren Hastings, perhaps, find no parallel in modern or ancient history of any nation in the world. Drunkenness, debauchery, profane swearing, and gambling were almost universally practiced in Calcutta.[25] Here are some instances:

> • Self-made soldier and prominent eighteenth century statesman Lord Robert Clive, who laid the foundation of British rule in India, indulged in alarming excesses.[26] Unexpurgated copies of several eighteenth century Indian chronicles narrate Clive's sexual escapades.[27] "Almost every evening Clive and his fellow libertines stalked up dark staircases to where lutes resonated a sensuous strain. Nautch [sic] dancers loomed out of purple shadows, like sirens of woven wind. In a continuous ecstasy of tensile bodily movement–with arms sweeping, hips wheeling, knees undulating to an increasingly hypnotic rhythm – they writhed to a crisis. Garments slipped to the floor, and soon the dancers were utterly bare; then they glided toward the spellbound patrons, encircling them, offering their swelling breasts, scarlet-tipped. Gyrating their knees and buttocks, making subtle and suggestive motions with supple hands, with ripe, pouting lips. Smooth and bulging clefts beckoned and the urge to penetrate the velvety depths became overwhelming. From such encounters, Clive (and several others) procured the pox disease."[28]
>
> Clive, returned to England with an annual fortune of 40,000 Sterling Pounds ($ 80,000 approximately). He had thus shown his colleagues and cohorts the way to enrich themselves by extortion, forgery and private trade.[29]

• Moral degradation of the English colonists in Calcutta was patent from the life of Warren Hastings[30], the first Governor-General of India, who kept for himself Madame Imhoff, the wife of a Russian painter, Baron Imhoff who was forced to get a divorce from her. Hastings lived in open adultery with Madame Imhoff, but nobody dared to prosecute him, because he was the Governor-General. According to historian Sir John William Kaye's account: "The administration of Warren Hastings, whatever may have been the greatness of his political career, was not distinguished by any striking progress in the moral and religious character of the British in India. He was Governor-General of India, and as such he could not openly offend against morality without offending as a ruler no less than as a man. Evil example in high place is a deadly evil, for vice, always infectious, diffuses itself with virulence a hundred-fold when the disease breaks out on an eminence. In no place, perhaps, in the world, is a bad example more pernicious than in India; for in no place is personal character more mighty an agent for evil or for good."[31]Hicky's Gazette published "the strictly private arrangement by which Mrs. Imhoff became the wife of the first Governor General of India." Hastings was infuriated to see such an exposure.

• Sir Philip Francis, Hastings's arch enemy, was caught in the very act of committing adultery with Mrs. Grand, then the wife of a petty writer, because Hastings wanted to humiliate him. Hastings said he found Francis to be "void of truth and honour [sic]"[32]

• The chaplains of Calcutta were less interested in performing divine service, as they had more opportunities in making money by trading. One of them married a lady who was much older than his mother, and had three husbands and fabulous wealth. When the old lady found the chaplain too gay and amorous, she promptly settled an annuity on him and banished him to the Island.[33]

• While in Calcutta, the members of the English community were wallowing in wealth. In the towns, every Englishman was a petty tyrant, and at almost every village, travelers could find the shops closed and the people fled, on the mere approach of a Sahib, for fear of extortions.

For a newsweekly meant for such a society, personal libel, and expose of private lives of British residents were appreciated and became regular

features. Hicky was conscious of the moral degradation of the English society of his days and was alive to the deleterious effects that scandals wrought on the social fabric of Calcutta. He was not the custodian of the morals of the English nation in Calcutta, but felt something should be done toward arresting the decline of the fair name of his mother country. Hicky advocated sanity in public life in his Gazette, issue after issue. Many of his insinuations were couched in an allegorical form, but it is not difficult to understand whom these statements were meant to refer. Here is an extraordinary advertisement captioned "WANTED" in Hicky's Gazette. [34]:

> A Resolution not to bribe, or a determination not to be bribed.
> LOST.—The dignity of the high Life, in attention to trifles.
> STOLEN.—into the Country — the inhabitants of the Esplanade.
> STRAY'D.—Sincerity and common honesty.
> FOUND.—that the Idea of liberty, is first verging to slavery.
> TO BE SOLD.—A great bargain—the reversion of modern honor.
> TO BE LET.—Unfurnished—several heads near the Esplanade.
> MISSING.—The advice of two able men retir'd from public business.
> ON SALE.—For ready money—whatever ought to be purchased by merit only.
> SCAVENGER'S CONTRACTS.—Any person willing to oppress the poor, may hear of full employment.

How did the public react to the appearance of the first newsweekly in India? The only contemporary to give us the benefit of his views is Attorney William Hickey, who witnessed some of Hicky's trals and tribulations. "As a novelty every person read it, and was delighted. Possessing a fund of low wit, his paper abounded with proof of that talent", testifies Hickey, the attorney.[35] The non-official European mercantile community, both at the Presidency, and at the suburbs, waited eagerly for Hicky's Gazette, as the newsweekly provided them with advertisements and announcements. He embarked on

his mission to expose the corruption. Hicky had a subtle way of doing this, but he knew that trouble was in store for him if he started exposing them all. Armed with his self-generated ethical code, Hicky was inspired by the independent section of the European trading community of Calcutta and the less fortunate military in the suburbs. He had a commitment to make his Gazette a forum for ventilating their grievances and meeting their commercial requirements.

A Paper Open to All Parties But Influenced by None

The newsweekly brought Hicky a monthly profit of 2000 rupees during its existence.[36] Expressing gratitude to the first list of contributors, Hicky stated should he be so "fortunate in his endeavors as to bring so useful an undertaking as a newsweekly to perfection he will think himself amply rewarded from which he hopes his subscribers will receive more natural benefit than from tincture of bark, castor oil, or columba root."[37] However, critics decried his newsweekly for scurrilous print containing a nauseous mixture of dullness and indecency. It was clear, however, that the administration strongly disliked the existence of a journal which described itself as "A Weekly Political and Commercial Paper, Open to All Parties but Influenced by None."[38] Moreover, the authorities could hardly ignore the complaints which were reaching them of libelous attacks in Hicky's Gazette.

As historian A. H. Watson observes, "Newspapers were naturally born to trouble" in the existing political conditions of India in those early days. According to Watson: "The rule of the East India Company was autocratic; its officers did not welcome criticism; they had large powers in deciding who should enter the settlements and how long their stay should be. Journals in those circumstances were either official, safe and dull, or were written with

an eye to the scandals of the community."[39] The paper had only been published a few months when news was received by Hicky that preparations were being made in other quarters to establish another newsweekly and that the support of some of his subscribers was being sought by the promoters of the new concern. Hicky was aware of a rival being born. In a notice in his paper of June 17, 1780, Hicky trusted that his supporters would not be found to be playing "so vile a part" and on June 24, 1780 acquainted his friends and the public about the rival newsweekly. At the same time, he expressed the hope that his readers would not desert him.[40]

As Hicky's Gazette gained popularity with the people he also made enemies. Hicky's Gazette specialized in the exposure of the private lives of servants of the Company, and Hicky who described himself as the first printer in the employ of the company does not seem to have enjoyed a very high reputation. He had no pretensions of literary attainment and his two-sheet newsweekly devoted considerable space to scurrilous attacks on the private lives of servants of the Company including Governor-General Warren Hastings himself. A personal attack on Mrs. Hastings and Simeon Droz, Colonel Thomas Dean Pearse and a Swedish Missionary, John Zachariah Kiernander, soon landed Hicky in trouble. Some instances of the conflict and confrontation are discussed later in the paper.

Official Censorship : Hicky's Gazette Denied Postal Concessions

In November 1780 Hastings promulgated an order which accused Hicky's Gazette of "containing several improper paragraphs tending to vilify private characters and to disturb the peace of the settlement." Having stated these charges, the order made it clear that the Gazette would no longer be permitted circulation through the channel of the General Post Office.

Around the same time, on November 18, 1780, Peter Reed and Bernard Messink started the India Gazette, or the Calcutta Public Advertiser, after obtaining official permission from the Governor-General. Hicky felt that as part of a calculated move to strangle his struggling newsweekly, Hastings denied even a prepaid passage through the post office of his newsweekly and caused the resultant deprivation of all present or prospective subscribers. Hicky's Gazette was severely affected by this, especially so, when Hastings granted a free postal passage to its rival, India Gazette. Hicky was struck with a penal blow. This was a big jolt for Hicky as it came within just ten months of his newsweekly's launch and the postal concession was the easiest and cheapest way to reach his readers.

Hicky bitterly complained of Hastings' action and described his order as the "the strongest proof of arbitrary power and influence that can be given." He added: "In England if a man is accused of robbery, treason, or murder, his person is secured, but his family is not ruined by Stopping of his letters at the Post-Office, it cannot be done, it is beyond the prerogative of the British Crown to put such an act in execution." Hastings' action indicated that he was preparing to go all out to crush Hicky and his Gazette. But to the chagrin of other opponents, Hicky remained unmoved by the threats to his freedom of expression. He declared that he would hazard his life for the paper and announced that he was determined to "make a scourge of all schemers and leading tyrants."

The appearance of the India Gazette did not entice Hicky's subscribers away but the ban of sending it through the public Post certainly deprived him of subscribers in the outlying areas of Calcutta. The withdrawal of postal services initially affected the circulation of Hicky's Gazette, but soon he came up with a new idea. The readers from the suburbs henceforth got their copies

through their friends in Calcutta and its immediate suburbs who were supplied with copies of the Gazette. He circulated his newsweekly through delivery men (twenty *hircarers* or messengers.[41]) who brought the paper to the readers' doorstep. Thus Hicky's journalistic zeal could not be crushed by the high-handed action of Hastings. In fact, the prohibition put on Hicky's paper only gave a sudden spurt to its circulation as it started giving the liveliest gossips and misdeeds of the official hierarchy. Hicky was indignant at the Government action which caused him an immediate loss of four hundred rupees (less than $ 23) monthly.

Hicky Attacks Promoters of Rival Newspaper, Hastings

Hicky was angry over undue favors extended to his rival. He was not only irate over postage concessions denied to his paper but was enraged over the way it was granted to his rival, India Gazette. Therefore the wrath of Hicky fell on all those backing the India Gazette, and he started virulent attacks against Reverend John Zachariah Kiernander, the Swedish Missionary[42] who sold the printing types to the new publication. Hicky lambasted Kiernander, describing him as "that man whose eve of life is fast verging to the shadow of death, whose silver head bows down loaded with the blossoms of the grave, and whom the sepulchre [sic] is already yawning to close upon." Kiernander was attacked with the spiritual weapons which Hicky thought most appropriate to the circumstances, as directed against a clergyman, and bombarded the aged pastor with texts of Scripture. The burden of Hicky's remonstrance: Kiernander was given the plant and types for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts, and not "for taking the bread out of the mouths of a true-born Englishman and his little family."

Although Hicky's main complaint against Kiernander was that he had

sold printing types to a rival paper, Hicky accused him of contemplating the sale of the Old Mission Church to the government. Kiernander secured a letter from the Governor-General clearing him of any such intention and sued Hicky for libel.[43] Kiernander was the first to sue Hicky for libel in the Supreme Court.[44] Hicky personally argued his case.[45] Hicky was found guilty for printing the libel and was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and a heavy fine of five hundred Indian Rupees (about $ 16). He was to be held in prison till the fine was paid.[46] However this did not deter Hicky from continued scurrilous writing and he launched bitter and abusive attacks on the Governor-General Hastings. Hicky came to know that although the official sanction to send the India Gazette free of postage through the channel of the General Post Office was issued only on November 24, 1781, the proprietor of the new paper had got such an assurance earlier in October. He was informed that the shrewd proprietors of the India Gazette had managed to get such a concession through Mrs. Hastings.

While commenting on this, Hicky asserted that he too could have had similar concessions if, as he had been advised by a leading public man, (his alleged "dialogue" with whom he gives verbatim), he had gone the right way about it, *viz.*, to solicit Mrs. Hastings, who had given out that she was ready for such solicitation, but that Hicky declined to do so, as he thought "there was something so sneaking and treacherous in going clandestinely to fawn and take advantage of a good-natured woman to draw her into a promise to getting that done which I know would be highly improper to ask her husband, though his unbounded love for his wife would induce him to comply with." Such scurrilous allusions to Mrs. Hastings and impudence directed against people in the corridors of power roused the indignation of the Governor-General. Whether this and much more in a similar strain

against Mrs. Hastings name provoked, or only precipitated, the order withdrawing postal facilities is not clear, but there is no doubt that Hastings himself was the promoter of it.

Ethical Lapses : Hicky 's Failure to Strike the Balance

Hicky's tirade against Hastings was partially provoked by the governor general's arch rival, Sir Phillip Francis[47], who despite being a member of Hastings council was his bitter critic. Francis was an ambitious man and he may have written the highly critical "Letters of Junius" of Great Britain. Without the help of Francis, it would not have been possible for a man of Hicky's modest education to run a newsweekly. Although Francis had a genuine point of view in his opposition to Hastings, he had his personal scruples that Hicky overlooked. For instance, Hicky's Gazette blacked out the sensational news of a duel between Hastings and Francis on August 17, 1780. It published only a garbled version of an imaginary duel, probably to save the reputation of Francis. One of the perennial problems Hicky faced was to separate his personal life from his role as a journalist. He became so close to Francis, one of his sources, that he avoided criticizing him. Thus, the first newsweekly was not impartial in selecting news for publication, though it took special care in exposing the misdeeds of the administration. Hastings was determined to crush Hicky but he did not take any steps until Francis decided to leave India.

As a journalist, Hicky was supposed to be an impartial observer, but at the same time, he was obligated by a sense of civic duty to contribute to the same community. The English society in Calcutta was characterized by scandals. Hicky was conscious of the moral degradation of the English community in Calcutta and strongly felt that something should be done

toward arresting the decline of the fair name of his homeland. Thus with unfailing regularity, Hicky started criticizing the high and the mighty, regardless of their official position. Slowly but surely, Hicky's Gazette became much too critical about the activities of such powerful men as Governor General Hastings and his close friend, Sir Eliza Impey, the chief justice of the Supreme Court. Not to be outdone, Hastings shot back with renewed vigor and started fresh efforts to crush the paper as well as its editor.

Attack Against Hicky

In June 1781, "an armed band of some 400 persons led by Europeans raided Hicky's press to effect his arrest," acting under instructions of the Governor General and the Chief Justice. But Hicky met force with force and on refusing to be taken away, beat them back, repulsed the attackers and undertook to attend the judge in court on being shown a legal authority for his arrest. He appeared on his own accord before the Supreme Court soon after, and as the Court had risen for the day, he was promptly imprisoned and held in detention, being unable to pay the bail of 80,000 Indian Rupees granted to him. Protesting against the demand of such a heavy amount for bail Hicky wrote a very reasonable letter to the Clerk of the Crown, describing the measures against him as "so singularly harassing and oppressive that it ..ems reserved for this country to heat down the senses which the Laws of England has placed to guard the subjects' liberty, in order to ruin a poor British subject and his helpless family, far removed from his King, his country and his friends, by overwhelming him with numberless indictments without giving him an opportunity of making his legal objections to it." Pleading for a reduction in the bail amount, he further said in his letter[48]:

> "Now, Sir, I hope you will be convinced that I am treated illegally, and cruelly, all that know me in this Settlement, also

> know that I am a very poor man, not worth a Rupee Thro' Unforeseen and Unavoidable losses and Misfortunes, and they also know that I am indefatigably industrious in my poor infant family; and taking all these together whether even 2,000 Rupees would not be excessive Bail for me; but if 5,000 Rupees will be accepted, I believe I can obtain it..."

Hicky maintained that a release on bail would give him "time to prepare for my defence [sic] and "the horrors of a prison so dreadful." He reiterated his "consciousness I have of my own innocence and integrity." Hicky also pleaded that if his "offer of reasonable bail be not accepted, I shall prepare for my defence and trial as well as my present unhappy situation will permit."[49] His prayer was not granted. However, his imprisonment did not lead to the extinction of his paper.

Hicky continued to edit his paper from prison without any change of tone.[50] In January 1882, Hastings returned to Calcutta after being absent in the North-Western Frontier provinces for some months and the case against Hicky was heard. It resulted in him being sentenced to a year's imprisonment and a fine of 2000 Indian Rupees ($ 65).[51] On the second indictment, Chief Justice Elijah Impey awarded Warren Hastings libel damages of 5,000 Indian Rupees ($ 165), which, however, the Governor-General waived.

Encouraged by this success, Hicky persisted in his writings. But if Hicky was indomitable, Hastings was equally, if not more, revengeful. With the aid of his friend, Sir Eliza Impey, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, he resolved to kill the paper. He instituted suit after suit against Hicky and at last succeeded in crushing both the paper and its editor. Hicky pleaded that his printing types should be exempted from seizure and this was granted. "Thus by protecting the types they (King's Judges) have protected the liberty of the subject and the liberty of the Press," concluded Hicky in his farewell message, which was written in jail and published in the Gazette of March

1782.[52] Being unable to pay the fine imposed on him his press was sold out and India's first newsweekly died a sudden death in early 1782.

Hicky in Poverty and Distress

Alth ugh Hicky was unjustly treated, there was no one to back him. No lawyer, advocate or attorney risked the displeasure and wrath of Hastings or his Chief Justice friend, Impey, to stand by Hicky. As a result, he had to defend himself as best as he could and pleaded for *forma pauperis* (a person without means) in defending four fresh charges brought against him by Hastings and others. After two years in jail, Hicky spent the rest of his life in discomfort. He was gradually reduced to poverty and distress partially caused by non-payment of his dues by the East India Company. The magnitude of the East India Company's ruthlessness and power against Hicky may be judged from the fact that the Company owed Hicky for 16 years a sum of 35,092 Indian Rupees plus interest for a printing job he had undertaken for them.[53] After many years, he was offered a pittance – about one-fifth of the amount – 6,711 Indian Rupees – provided he accepted it as a full and final settlement of his claims on the Government. Hicky was reduced to such straits that he expressed his willingness to accept the settlement provided the money was paid him in twenty-four hours.

The concluding years of the pioneer of the English press in India were spent in penurious circumstances. In November 1793, Hicky appealed for help to the ex-Governor-G neral Warren Hastings, who was the root cause of his ruin. In his letter Hicky said he was unemployed for several years and was "much distressed with a very large family, which with repeated and severe fits of sickness, has reduced me much... As I am now a very old man, should I die here my children must beg through the streets of Calcutta as they

are by their youth unable to earn their own bread." Hicky expressed his interest in the position of a deputy to the Clerk of the Market to "render great service to the public, as I am allowed to be a good judge of all kinds of provisions." He further assured: " Though old, I am, thank God, one of the activist men in the settlement" and explained to Hastings that a "line or two from you, Sir, would procure me the place alluded to, or any other which might enable me to support my family with frugality."[54] As an alternative to this, Hicky also expressed intentions of proceeding to England employed as a surgeon of a ship but he remained in Calcutta and in a letter written six years later, at Christmas 1799, gave a piteous account of his impecunious condition. He concluded his letter on a solemn note:

> "It would be painful to you to read a long and particularly account of the distress of myself and children; let it suffice that everything which I have has been sold and mortgaged for my unhappy family, and none but God and ourselves know the keenness of our distress.[55]
> Wishing you and Mrs. Hastings,
> health and every other blessing,
> I remain, with due respect,
>
> Your obedient servant,
> James A. Hicky."

The uncharacteristic note of atonement in Hicky's letter forces one to wonder if this was the same person who criticized Hastings less than two decades ago. Hicky died in December 1802 on his way to China on board the *Ajax* and was buried at sea. Hicky must have been on a business trip to bring Chinese goods to India because at the time of his death, he was engaged in the trading of "Europe, China & Country Goods." The exact date of his death is not on record, but it was sometime in the first half of December 1802 for the Calcutta Gazette of Thursday, December 16, 1802, records: Deaths: "Lately

to the Eastward, on board the Ajax, Dr. J. A. Hicky."[56] Hicky died intestate and insolvent. Within a year of his death, Hicky's properties and personal effects were sold by public auction.[57]

Hicky's Role as a Press Pioneer

During the two years when Hicky published his newsweekly, his pioneering spirit and commitment to journalism was evident from the doggedness and the fervor with which he faced the oppression by the British rulers.[58] A fiercely independent journalist, Hicky showed how truly distinguished newsweeklies should serve society, even at the risk of official displeasure.[59] Hicky's newsweekly made interesting reading with its ample dose of scurrilous reporting, risqué advertisements reflecting the low morality in society, and scandalous accounts of the misdeeds of British administrators in India and was proscribed unjustly with an order that no copy might pass through the Post Office.[60] Notwithstanding its nauseous mixtures of dullness and indecency, Hicky's Gazette became an example of fearless journalism for the next fifty years for newsweekly editors and publishers who followed Hicky. They uttered their feeble voices in peril of deportation and under menace of the censor's rod.

As a journalist whose newsweekly was written and edited in jail, Hicky firmly believed in the freedom of the press. He fought for it, exposed corruption in public life, fiercely opposed misuse of power and condemned depravity among British rulers. In doing so, he paid a price, suffered persecution, imprisonment and poverty. Despite occasional ethical lapses, Hicky made his mark as a pioneer who suffered grievously for championing the cause of the freedom of the Press. In the annals of Indian journalism, Hicky has been remembered as the "Father of the Press in India."[61]

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Bengal Calendar, 1792

Appendix: A: Chronology of Events

1757 Battle of Plassey won by Robert Clive

1774 Warren Hastings Governor-General of Fort William, Calcutta

1776 First attempt to start a newsweekly in Calcutta by William Bolt widespread alarm in Company circles and he was deported.

1780 **January :** James Augustus Hicky starts India's first English newsweekly, Bengal Gazette or the Calcutta General Advertiser.

1780 **June:** Hicky informs his reader about official permission given to a rival newsweekly India Gazette. Urges readers not to desert him.

1780 **November:** Civil servant Simeon Droze complains against Hicky's Gazette to Governor-General Warren Hastings, who prohibits circulation of Hicky's Gazette through the Post Office.

1780 **November:** B. Messink and Peter Reed establish the India Gazette. Granted concessions to distribute paper much to Hicky's chagrin.

1781 Hicky informs his readers about an futile attempt to assassinate him.

1781 **March:** Governor-General Warren Hastings initiates three criminal prosecutions against Hicky for publication of libels against him.

1781 **May:** Rev. Zachariah Kiernander, a Swedish missionary, complains in Supreme Court of libel in Hicky's Gazette of March 31, 1781.

1781 **June:** An armed group of policemen under order from the Chief Justice attacks Hicky to arrest him. He refused to be taken away forcibly. Appeared in court the next day. Jailed. Publishes newsweekly from jail.
June- July: Trial of Hicky for libel against Governor-General Warren Hastings and Rev. J. Kiernander. Indictment on Bengal Gazette.

1782 **January:** Trial of Hicky continues. Hicky remained in prison till February 1785 when he was released by Warren Hastings.

1793 **February:** Hicky sends memo to the then Governor General John Shore, praying for payment of his overdue bill from the government.

1795 **March:** Deed of release executed by Hicky

1802 **December:** Hicky died on board the *Ajax* on his way to China. Buried at sea.

Notes

[1]By 1756, the East India company became involved in hostilities in India both with the French and Indian rulers. Robert Clive's army was able to depose the nawab or Indian governor of Bengal at the Battle of Plassey in 1757.

[2]Brian Gardner, The East India Company: A History (New York: The McCall Publishing Company, 1972) 21.

[3] The growing weakness of the central Moghul Power gave rise to frequent conflicts between rival provincial satraps In India. The death of a nawab almost invariably brought in inheritance tangles among rival claimants to the throne. "The foreign Company first seized these opportunities for selling their services to the warring chiefs in lieu of profits and then of direct intervention to suit its own advantage. Gradually it claimed and began to enjoy "extra-territorial rights on India's soil" neglecting the lawful but puppet rulers of the land. With the Battle of Plassey the new commercial capitalist-economy operated from Britain in her own interest, was forcibly imposed on the people of this land and the age of plunder and exploitation began.

[4] C. H. Phillips, The East India Company 1784-1834 (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1940) v.

[5] The British-owned East India Company, after its arrival as traders in India in 1750 radically altered its objective and set itself up as the ruler of the province.

[6] The British-owned East India Company's merchants and their counterparts in the private sector were engaged in turning India into "brightest jewel in Britain's imperial diadem" through their exploits.

[7] Brian Gardner, The East India Company: A History (New York: The McCall Publishing Company, 1972) 11.

[8] The East India Company first installed a printing press in Bombay in 1674 with a "generous supply of types and paper." Madras had the privilege of having the next press in 1772 and "an official printing press" was installed in Calcutta in 1779. Meanwhile the Baptist Missionaries started a printing press in Serampore, then a Dutch possession. They were refused by Lord Wellesley to instal a press in Calcutta. They took the lead in casting Bengali moving types. With the help of an artisan, Panchanan Karmakar, who introduced punch-cutting in Bengali, types were manufactured from the designs made by Jitendra Kumar Roy. The first Bengali book, Halhead's Grammar was printed in 1773 and in 1818 the first Bengali weekly newspaper, Vangal Gazette was published. But the Company's administrators took precaution to ensure that any of these presses in its settlements was not used for printing any account of their activities in this country. They were afraid of these being despatched to London and reaching the hands of their critics. So, efforts to start a printing press or a news-sheet were vehemently suppressed by the bureaucrats of the East India Company.

[9] Job Charnock founded Calcutta from a collection of huts at the water's edge. The original Kalikata grew to be a vast metropolis of 3,500,000 people. Charnock ruled, with a Brahmin widow he had rescued from the funeral pyre. He establishing a fort at Kalikata. Fort William at Calcutta was to become the headquarters of Copmpany's third presidency, and eventually to take precedence over the other two and become the capital of India.

[10] When, in 1690, Job Charnock purchased the three -villages of Sutanooty, Kalikata and Govindapur on the bank of the river Hooghly to establish a factory for the-East India Company he had not possibly the faintest idea that he was unconsciously paving the way to acquire the "brightest jewel in Britain's imperial diadem." Calcutta gradually grew in importance and became -the centre of vile conspiratorial activities to bleed the people white as well as the seat for the spread of western education and culture.

[11] Major John Scott. A short Review of the Transactions in Bengal, in India Tracts, 1771-1882 (Calcutta: Bangabasi Office, 1905)

[12] William Bolt's notification came like a thunderbolt; it alarmed the administrators. So, the Select Committee of the Council at Fort William directed him "to quit Bengal and proceed to Madras on the first ship that shall sail from that Presidency in order to take his passage from thence to Europe."

[13] There was no uniformity in the dateline in the masthead. The masthead was changed on and from November 18th 1780 (Saturday, November 11th to Saturday, November 18th, 1780) as Hicky's Bengal Gazette; or the Original Calcutta General Advertiser. Supplements ("Extraordinary") were published by Hicky once or twice only.

[14] Margarita Barns, The Indian Press: A History of the Growth of Public Opinion in India, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd,1940).

[15] J. Natarajan, History of Indian Journalism -Part II of the Report of the Press Commission, India (Delhi, Manager, Publications Division, 1955).

[16] A. E. Charlton, "The English Language Newspapers," in Roland E. Wolseley, ed., Journalism in Modern India, rev. ed. (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p.8. A. E. Charlton of The Statesman, was among the last of the British editors in India. He retired in 1967.

[17] P. Thankappan Nair, A Tercentenary History of Calcutta, Volume III, A History of the Calcutta Press, The Beginnings, (Firma KLM Private Limited, Calcutta, India, 1987).

[18] Mohit Mitra, A History of Indian Journalism (Calcutta, India: National Book Agency Private Limited 1969).

[19] Hicky's Gazette, March 11, 1780.

[20] An incomplete file of Hicky's Gazette has been meticulously preserved in the National Library, Calcutta. Other locations include libraries in England, Australia and the U. S.

[21] Hicky's Gazette, the first tabloid in this subcontinent, was a 4-paged paper, printed according to the then prevailing standards, which may be primitive to

a modern mind. The size of the two-sheeted *Gazette* was possibly 38 cm. X 28 cm., as the print area occupied 31.5 X 20.5 cm. Three columns to a page, with a width of 7 cm. to a column and rules to separate them.

22 All advertisements were classified and appropriately titled, but the news items generally went without captions or headlines. Eccentric use of capital letters after the fashion of the day and italicization for adding emphasis were the other stock-in-trade of those days. Advertisements were displayed using small and big types, but there was uniformity in the size of the types used in the editorial columns.

23 A dowry is property or money brought by a bride to her husband during marriage.

24 Mohit Moitra, A History of Indian Journalism (National Book Agency Private Limited, Calcutta, India, January 1969).

25 The morality of the age was indicated by an auctioneer's house sale advertisement which mentioned of women as an added attraction:"A garden house and ground situated at Taltolah bazar, which to any gentleman about to leave India, who may be solicitous to provide for an Hindoostanee (native Indian) female friend.

26 Lord Clive felt no compunction in forging the name of a colleague on a document that laid the foundation of the British empire in India. His councilors and British agents did not suffer any qualms of conscience when they flagrantly hoarded rice to bring about the Bengal famine of 1770 which severely affected 76,000 people. The ravages of the famine paved the fortune path for the unscrupulous English merchants in famished Bengal.

27 Clive found Muslim women extremely adultrous.

28 Allen Edwardes, The Rape of India (New York: The Julian Press, Inc. Publishers, 1966) 48-49.

29 Allen Edwardes, The Rape of India: A biography of Robert Clive and a sexual history of the conquest of Hindustan (New York: The Julian Press, Inc. Publishers, 1960).

30 As the first and the most famous of the British governors general of India, Warren Hastings (1732- 1818) was a great administrator. But his name was unjustly tarnished by a long-drawn-out trial of impeachment (though acquitted) on his return to England. According to Sir John William Kaye, the administration of Hastings, whatever may have been the greatness of his political career, was not distinguished by any striking progress in the moral and religious character of the English in India. In his assessment of the social mores during Hastings rule, Kaye said: "He (Hastings) was governor general of India, and as such he could not openly offend against morality without offending as a ruler no less than as a man. Evil example in high place is a deadly evil, for vice always infectious, diffuses itself with virulence a hundred-fold when the disease breaks out on an eminence.

"In no place, perhaps, in the world is bad example more pernicious than in India; for in no place is personal character more mighty as an agent for evil or for good." (Kaye)

31 J. W. Kaye, Christianity in India, London, 1859,p.115

32 Colonel G. B. Malleson, The Life of Warren Hastings (London: Chapman & Hall, 1894)

33 Allen Edwardes, The Rape of India.

34 Hicky's Gazette, April 28th –May 5, 1781,

35 William Hicky's Memoirs, vol. II, p. 175.

36 Hicky's statement in the court on January 23, 1782; Hydes's notes, BPP, Vol. III, Sr. No. 7, p. 59.

37 Busteed, op. cit., pp 184-185.

38 This announcement appeared below the newspaper's masthead.

39 A. H. Watson," Origin and Growth of Journalism Among Europeans," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 145: Part II: Supplement on India (September 1929), 169.

40 Hicky's Gazette, June 24, 1780

41 Hicky's Gazette, December 2-9, 1981: Hicky's address.

42 Reverend John Zachariah Kiernander's Beth Tephillah or the Mission church is a mute witness to the rise and fall of Journalism in Old Calcutta.

43 BPP, Vol. III, Sr. No.7,p.61.

44 Kiernander lodged a complaint with the Governor-General on May 13, 1781 in which he stated that Hicky had published a libel in his Gazette of March 31, 1781, to the effect that he had offered the Main Church for sale to the Government.

45 Justice Hyde's notes on this libel suit are available in National Library, Calcutta, though the original petition of Kiernander and the counts of indictments are missing from the records.

46 BPP, Vol. III, Sr. No.7, p. 52 and p. 55.

47 Francis had old scores to settle with Hastings. In 1784, after Hastings resigned and returned to England, Francis, in his newly-acquired role as member of Parliament, succeeded in having charges brought, on which Hastings was impeached before the house of the Lords. But he was later acquitted.

48 Hicky wrote this letter (dated: 19th June, 1781) from the Calcutta Jail. This letter was published in Bengali Gazette during the week June 16-23, 1781.

49 Hicky called for having a week's time for preparing his defense.

50J. Natarajan, History of Indian Journalism (New Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1955)

51 Margarita Barns, The Indian Press (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1940), 49.

52 Ibid., 49.

53 The job involved printing of 16,800 sheets of Council proceedings on a commission from Eyre Coote for which Hicky claimed the amount.

54 H. E. Busteed, Echoes from Old Calcutta,(Calcutta, 1882) 216, 219-220 .

55 Ibid., 221.

56 Calcutta Gazette, Thursday, December 16, 1802. Supplement page 2. Foster, quoting the authority of the Asiatic Annual Register of 1803, has also correctly inferred that "Doctor J. Hickey" died sometime in December, 1802. (BPP, Sr. Nos. 59-60, pp.125-126).

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The 'Hoary-Headed Apostle of Satan' and Press Freedom in America: The Seditious Blasphemy Libel and Censorship Trials of Freethought Journalist Abner Kneeland

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The 'Hoary-Headed Apostle of Satan' and Press Freedom in America: The Seditious Blasphemy Libel and Censorship Trials of Freethought Journalist Abner Kneeland

ABSTRACT

Forging an American national consensus on the legal status of journalists--particularly those arguing for unpopular positions--is an ongoing process. Many do not realize that the First Amendment rights of the press recorded in the U.S. Constitution, often taken for granted today especially in the area of political speech, were not applied to the states until many decades later. Indeed, the notion that state powers over journalists remained predominant was commonly held until the 20th century. This study looks at the career of Abner Kneeland, an important freethought figure in 1830s, and the legal actions for seditious blasphemy brought against him by Massachusetts authorities in his capacity as the Boston-based publisher-editor of the nationally-distributed *The Investigator*. As a freethinker, Kneeland devoted his journalistic efforts to promoting news and opinion about religious and political matters formed independently from traditional authority or established beliefs. His hard-fought censorship trials for individual liberty, reminiscent of earlier dissident pamphleteers seeking freedom from authoritarian actions by European monarchs, point to the rejection of democratic secular humanism at a critical time in American national history. Even though Kneeland lost his case appeals, the issues articulated in his defense influenced later fighters for free speech and brought about an end to seditious blasphemy prosecutions in the U.S.

The 'Hoary-Headed Apostle of Satan' and Press Freedom in America:

The Seditious Blasphemy Libel and Censorship Trials

of Freethought Journalist Abner Kneeland

On December 20, 1833, *The Investigator* (commonly called *The Boston Investigator*), a magazine with a "temper that of Thomas Paine, but more negative in theology,"[1] published a "scandalous, impious, obscene, blasphemous and profane libel"[2] of and concerning God. The publisher/editor was former Baptist and Universalist preacher Abner Kneeland. A vocal exponent of free thought, Kneeland was convicted in November 1835 of blasphemous libel under a 1782 Massachusetts statute linking irreverence to sedition. Kneeland's appeal to the state's Supreme Judicial Court was heard March 1836. Arguing before the court on his own behalf, Kneeland cited the works of famous writers who also questioned the beliefs of traditional Christian orthodoxy, presented a grammar lesson to the court on how the use of commas changes the meanings of sentences, and evoked the guarantees of religious and press freedoms offered in the Commonwealth's Bill of Rights.

The court took two years to issue an opinion which sustained Kneeland's conviction. In upholding the conviction, Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw, a minister's son, defined blasphemy as:

> ". . .speaking evil of the Diety with impious purpose to derogate from the divine majesty, and to alienate the minds of others from the love and reverence of God. It is purposely using words concerning God, calculated and designed to impair and destroy the reverence, respect, and confidence due to him. . . .It is a wilful and malicious attempt to lessen men's reverence of God."[3]

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[1]Quotes are from Mary R. Whitcomb, "Abner Kneeland: His Relations to Early Iowa History." *Annals of Iowa*. 3rd Series, 6:5 (April 1904), p. 346 (340-363), and are unattributed.

[2]*Commonwealth v. Kneeland*, found in *Massachusetts Reports* 37 (*Pickering's Mass. Reports* 20) (1838), pp. 206-246

[3]*Commonwealth v. Kneeland*. See also Harold L. Nelson, "Seditious Libel in Colonial America,"*American Journal of Legal History* 3 (1959), pp. 160+; and Daniel Ross, "Judicial Speaking During the Blasphemy Trials of Holyoake and Kneeland," *Free Speech* 52 (October 1981), pp. 5-10. Recognizing the importance that the later American freethought leader Robert

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Shaw opined that Kneeland's offense prohibited by the statute was the "wilful denial of God. . . with an intent and purpose" to harm the reverence due God. After five trials and four years, and in spite of a petition put before the governor of Massachusetts signed by 168 prominent clergy and laymen who declared that "the freedom of speech and the press. . .is never to be restrained by legislation,"[4] the 62-year old Kneeland served his 60-day sentence.

This paper will examine free speech implications of the Kneeland case, which took place before the First Amendment was applied to the states. Over the years the Kneeland case has received more attention from legal researchers investigating religious freedoms than from journalism scholars exploring the implications of the trial in terms of freedom of the press. This neglect is unfortunate since Kneeland was an influential figure in the new republic, authoring books and pamphlets and editing and/or publishing six publications, the content of which were

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Ingersoll attached to these cases in his defense of Charles B. Reynolds for blasphemy, the latter paper analyzes the arguments advanced in the blasphemy trials of George Holyoake and Abner Kneeland. Ross "suggests institutionalized religion remained a social source for restricting and regulating intellectual freedom."

[4]*Bancroft Papers*, Massachusetts Historical Society. See also Leonard Williams Levy, compiler. *Blasphemy in Massachusetts: Freedom of Conscience and the Abner Kneeland Case, a Documentary Record.* New York: Da Capo Press, 1973, p. xx. Contemporary case-related materials include: Abner Kneeland, defendant, *Trial of Abner Kneeland for Blasphemy, Part 1, In the Municipal Court, Jan. 21, 1834* and Abner Kneeland, defendant,*Trial of Abner Kneeland for Blasphemy, Part 2, In the Municipal Court, May 13, 1834.* Pamphlets. Xerox copies in State of Iowa. Historical Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs. State Historical Society of Iowa. Library/Archives Bureau. Des Moines and Iowa City. B K733; Abner Kneeland, defendant, *An Introduction to the Defence of Abner Kneeland, Charged with Blasphemy, before the Municipal Court, in Boston, Mass. at the January Term, in 1834.* Boston: printed for the author, 1834, 43 pages; Abner Kneeland, *Speech of Abner Kneeland: Delivered Before the Supreme Court of the City of Boston, in His Own Defence, on an Indictment for Blasphemy. November Term, 1834.* Boston: J. Q. Adams, 1834, 32 pages; *An Appeal to Common Sense and the Constitution, in Behalf of Unlimited Freedom of Public Discussion: Occasioned by the Late Trial of Rev. Abner Kneeland, for Blasphemy.* Boston: n.p., 1834, 14 pages; and *A Review of the Trial, Conviction, and Final Imprisonment . . . of Abner Kneeland, . . .* 1838. Copy at Harvard University Library.

heavily influenced by his growing conviction of the importance of individual liberty and heretical approach to church involvement in public life.[5]

After providing a brief biography of Kneeland, this article will discuss the social and political environments of the 1830s to provide context to the case and to suggest that forces other than religio-moral principles were at stake. Courtroom arguments made by protagonists will also be presented, including Kneeland's strenuous and articulate legal defense which pointed to Article XVI of the Massachusetts Bill of Rights to argue for an individual's right to publish without fear of government suppression.

Many of Kneeland's contemporaries believed he was "a hoary-headed apostle of Satan"[6] and an immoral being who polluted everything he touched. However, Kneeland regarded himself as a champion of free thought and liberty of conscious. While not alone in his heretical beliefs, Kneeland was certainly more outspoken than most of his fellow freethinkers and less cautious about offending those in power. The Kneeland case aroused freethinkers around the United States and led, at Kneeland's urging, to the formation of the United Moral and Philosophical Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, the first national free-thought society in the United States. This episode also earned Kneeland an important footnote in American legal history: He was the last person imprisoned by Massachusetts for the crime of blasphemy.

Kneeland, born in 1774 in Gardner, Mass., experienced periods of religious doubt throughout a young adulthood that included pastorates as a Baptist preacher in Vermont and a Universalist preacher in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. He also was elected to the New

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[5]See Henry Steele Commager, "The Blasphemy of Abner Kneeland," *New England Quarterly* 29 (1935); and Roderick Stuart French, *The Trials of Abner Kneeland: A Study in the Rejection of Democratic Secular Humanism.* Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1971. Available on microfilm, 1 reel, from Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1971. French's 382-page work includes a useful bibliography.

[6]Samuel Gridley Howe, "Atheism in New England," *The New England Magazine*, 7 (January 1835), pp. 500-509.

Hampshire House of Representatives in 1810 and 1811, and worked in the mercantile business for a while in Salem, Mass. In 1817 he moved to Whitestown, N.Y., to preach, then to the Lombard Street Universalist Church in Philadelphia. It was there he edited his first magazine the *Christian Messenger* from 1819 to 1821, then the *Universalist Magazine and Christian Messenger* from 1821 to 1823, and the *Gazetteer* in 1824. As was his chosen denomination, which was at odds with the Puritanical orthodoxy espoused by many New England churches, his discourse was often controversial.[7] He left Philadelphia for the Prince Street Universalist Church in New York City, but by 1827 he had caused such a division in the church because of his sermons, he resigned. Kneeland then became the leading editor of *The Olive Branch*, a Universalist weekly paper published by the New York Universalist Book Society, of which he was president. But again, controversy erupted as he challenged the New York church he had left and the Hudson River Universalist Association. He then established the Second Universalist Society of New York and appointed himself pastor. Kneeland also became sole editor of the *Olive Branch and Christian Inquirer*, a weekly devoted to "free inquiry, pure morality and rational christianity."[8] However, his religious doubts increased and by 1829 Kneeland's heretical views led to his voluntary dismissal from the Universalist Church. He renounced Christianity in a series of public lectures in New York City, which were later published as *A Review of the Evidences of Christianity*.[9]

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[7]Whitcomb, p. 341.

[8]Whitcomb, p. 343.

[9]Abner Kneeland, *A Review of the Evidences Of Christianity; in a Series of Lectures, Delivered in Broadway Hall, New-York, August, 1829. To Which is Prefixed, an Extract fromWyttenbach's Opuscula, on The Ancient Notices of the Jewish Nation Previous to the Time of Alexander the Great*. 2d ed. New York: Published at Tammany Hall [etc., etc.], 1830, 192 pages. 6th ed. Boston: Office of *The Investigator*, 1835, 204 pages. Republished, Boston: Office of *The Investigator*, 1887. Copy of the latter in State Historical Society of Iowa on microfilm. See also Abner Kneeland, "Rev. Abner Kneeland's Resignation," in *New York Olive Branch*, Newspaper Division, State Historical Society of Iowa; and J. Gordon Melton, *Biographical Dictionary of American Cult and Sect Leaders*. New York: Garland, 1986.

Kneeland moved to Boston in 1830 and became a lecturer at the newly formed First Society of Free Enquirers and in 1831 founded *The Investigator*, a magazine devoted to free thought. Holding lectures in the Federal Street Theatre, Kneeland preached from his *Bible of Reason*. His lectures attracted audiences of 2,000 and a like number subscribed to *The Investigator*, an inexpensive publication with a large circulation among the city's poor.

Kneeland was a man of boundless energy and initiative. Besides his work during this period on periodicals, he taught himself Greek, Latin and Hebrew and in 1822 published a translation of the New Testament. In addition, Kneeland was a pioneer of phonetic reform and in 1827 published *A Key to the New System of Orthography* as a way to promote a new alphabet that would make learning the alphabet easier for children.[10] He also distributed birth control information and, according to Melton, was probably the anonymous publisher of the first birth control book in the United States *Fruits of Philosophy*.[11]

To help frame this story, described by Levy as the "most important and colorful of all American blasphemy cases,"[12] in American history, one must consider the many factors contributing to the growing identity crisis that was evolving in America at that time.

As Kneeland began his ministry in the early 19th Century, the political Establishment in the young country faced many uncomfortable decisions regarding how to treat the new American immigrants. Between 1800 and 1820 approximately 184,000 immigrants entered the new nation. In 1837, the annual influx of immigrants, mostly Europeans, into the United States numbered 79,340. To deny these new Americans certain basic rights would have seemed tantamount to rejecting the very principles of the Declaration of Independence for which the Founding Fathers

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[10]Whitcomb, p. 342.

[11]Melton, p. 143.

[12]Leonard W. Levy, *Blasphemy*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993, p. 413. Also of interest is the earlier Leonard W. Levy, *Treason Against God: A History of the Offense of Blasphemy*. New York: Schocken Books, 1981.

had fought so hard and to ignore the tenets espoused in the Bill of Rights and often by state constitutions as well. To have rejected their claims would have also denied them access to a cheap source of labor. The solution many found was to allow them in but to make their life unpleasant.[13] As a result, workingmen's parties were established to address laborers' grievances in a political and economic system dominated by leaders perceived by many as aristocratic, aloof and contemptuous of common folk. In 1833 a convention of workingmen from all of New England was held in Boston. The convention passed resolutions opposing child labor and imprisonment for debt and supporting lien laws and tax law equity. When Boston shipwrights and caulkers attempted to unionize, owners claimed such activities un-American, unconstitutional, immoral and un-Christian. Additionally, immigrants brought with them to new America all kinds of aberrant philosophies, including socialism and communism. These philosophies gained followers and advocates as these groups gained members and struggled for a political voice.

There was also a continuation of the revolutionary zeal that had delivered America from the hands of England's oppressors. Now, however, this radicalism was directed toward a reform movement that aimed to set right everything that seemed to be going wrong with the American dream. Inequality, injustice, and economic exploitation were just a few of the many themes taken up by America's new radicals and espoused by such people as the English reformer Robert Dale Owen, and Frances Wright of Scotland, who travelled with Lafayette on his triumphant return to America in 1818. (Together Owen and Wright edited the radical magazine the *Free Inquirer* and became friends with Kneeland.) These views were regarded by the political Establishment as unsettling to civil society and the morality of the people. The result was a stark separation of classes. One European visitor commented that "There does exist. . .an aristocracy of the most odious kind,--an aristocracy of knowledge, education, and refinement, which is inconsistent with

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[13]Levy (1993), p. xix.

the true democratic principle of absolute equality."[14] Reform movements embraced such themes as temperance, women's rights, capital punishment, prisons, treatment of the insane and handicapped, peace movements, and even vegetarianism.

The early 19th Century also saw notions of continuity, traditional wisdom and the ultimate authority of God give way to the power of human reason, to science, and to the will of the majority of the people. The concepts of reason and science were perceived by some as assaults on traditional Christianity. The Classical Christian Consciousness suggested that man was inherently frail, weak and tainted by original sin with tendencies for self-love and self-aggrandizement. The foundation of this philosophy was that in any social order power would be abused. If one applied the power of reason in this setting, the likely outcome would be tyranny. Salvation came through faith and grace. Secular Democratic Consciousness believed in the natural goodness and imminent perfectibility of man. The struggle between the status quo, defended by those who benefitted unduly from it, and the masses who wished for a better society, was an ongoing one. The battle for America's consciousness between the Classical-Christian orthodoxy and the Secular Democratic orientation was manifested in the election of 1828 when Andrew Jackson, a Democrat and a man for the common folk, defeated John Quincy Adams, a National Republican and part of the New England, aristocratic elite who had ruled the country since Washington. In other words, traditional Christian orthodoxy was being questioned by many local philosophical and religious groups and Massachusetts was a hot-bed of so-called free religion.

Kneeland's indictment for blasphemy contained three counts based on articles in *The Investigator*. The first count alleged an obscenity relating to the story of the immaculate conception and the second count alleged an irreverent ridicule of prayer. The third count was based on a published letter written by Kneeland to the editor of the *Universalist Trumpet*. He had written:

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[14]The quote is attributed to Thomas Hamilton of Scotland in Page Smith, *A People's History of the Ante-Bellum Years: The Nation Comes of Age*. Vol. IV. New York: McGraw Hill: 1981, p. 797

> "1. Universalists believe in a god which I do not; but believe that their god, with all his moral attributes (aside from nature itself) is nothing more than a chimera of their own imagination.
>
> 2. Universalists believe in Christ, which I do not; but believe that the whole story concerning him is as much a fable and a fiction, as that of the god Prometheus, the tragedy of whose death is said to have been acted on the stage in the theatre at Athens, 500 years before the christian era.
>
> 3. Universalists believe in miracles, which I do not; but believe that every pretension to them can either be accounted for on natural principles or else is to be attributed to mere trick and imposture.
>
> 4. Universalists believe in the resurrection of the dead, in immortality and eternal life, which I do not; but believe that all life is mortal, that death is an eternal extinction of life to the individual who possess it, and that no individual life is, ever was, or ever will be eternal."[15]

Levy asserts that for the state of Massachusetts this was evidence enough that "the flag of atheism had been planted in its midst in preparation for an 'exterminating warfare' against Christianity."[16]

Andrew Dunlap, a high-ranking Massachusetts Democrat and former state attorney general, defended Kneeland in Judge Peter Thatcher's Municipal Court in January 1834. The Commonwealth's prosecutor was Samuel D. Parker, the son of an Episcopal bishop. Parker compared Kneeland's writings with the radical beliefs of Owen and Wright and argued that if Kneeland was not stopped, moral restraints would cease to exist, illicit sexual relations would be the order of the day, and laws of property would be repealed, thus ushering in to Boston the socialist experiments attempted by Owen and Wright in other places. Parker also pointed out Kneeland's writings about contraceptive methods and the "physiology of the female genital system" and charged that this constituted a "complete recipe" for corrupting the youth of Boston. Thus, in Parker's view, Kneeland was guilty of disseminating moral and political poison.[17]

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[15]*American State Trials*, Vol. XIII. St. Louis: Thomas Law Book Co., 1921, p. 453. The full text of the articles in question might also be found in Levy (1973), pp. 4-38.

[16]Levy (1993), p. 415.

[17]*American State Trials*, Vol. XIII, p. 512.

Penalties for blasphemy in Massachusetts included imprisonment for up to one year, or sentencing to the pillory, to whipping, or by being made to sit on the gallows with a rope around the blasphemer's neck. In his charge to the jury Thatcher, a Whig, warned of dire consequences should religious restraints disintegrate. He pointed out that if an individual may be punished for injurious slander against a fellow citizen, it would seem "to be a great defect in the law. . .there were no punishment for him, who should maliciously slander Almighty God."[18] This first trial ended with a conviction and Kneeland appealed.

The second trial began in May 1834 before Judge Samuel Putnam of the Supreme Judicial Court. Parker presented the same arguments he posed to the jury in the first trial. In his presentation the prosecutor reviewed the important topics involved in the trial, including:

> "1. The rights of conscience--I would not impugn them--they are guaranteed by our Institutions--use your as you please, but leave me mine--abuse not, vilify not, obliterate not my creed. . .we have a right to be protected from insult and not have our feelings hurt by offensive and disgusting obscenity. Such is the true construction of religious freedom.
>
> 2. The liberty of free discussion--We indulge it to the utmost latitude-we ask only that it be decent--that it be fair--that it be sincere--that it violate not the laws of the land. . . .
>
> 3. The liberty of the Press--We admit and would support it to the fullest extent. . . But restrain its licentiousness--It may be the engine of mischief as well as of good. It is the liberty of fire arms--the liberty of the sword--of the element of fire, to be rightfully and lawfully used on proper occasions, but not for murder or assassination, or mischief or malice on persons or reputation. . .Every may has a right to investigate with decency controversial points of the Christian Religion, but man, consistently, with a law which exists only under its sanctions, has a right to deny its very existence, and to pour fourth such shocking and insulting invectives as the lowest establishments of civil authority ought not to be subjected to, and which would soon be borne down my insolence and disobedience, if they were. . . ."[19]

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[18]*American State Trials*, Vol. XIII, p. 512. A reprint may also be found in Levy (1973), pp. 271-291.

[19]Samuel Dunn Parker, *Report of the Arguments of the Attorney of the Commonwealth: At the Trials of Abner Kneeland, for Blasphemy, in the Municipal and Supreme Courts, in Boston, January and May, 1834. S. D. Parker, in Behalf of the Commonwealth Opened the Cause...* Boston: Printed by Beals, Homer & Co., 1834; 93 pages. Note: Collected and published at the request of some Christians of various denominations. Copy at Harvard University Library. The cited text can also be found in Levy (1973), p. 193. See also *Sketches of the Arguments of the*

This second trial ended with a hung jury: eleven agreed with the prosecution in ten minutes. The lone dissenter was a friend of Dunlap's, Charles Gordon Greene, the Jacksonian editor of the Boston *Morning Post.*

The third trial before Judge Samuel Wilde in November 1834 also ended in a hung jury. David Henshaw, leader of the Democratic party in Massachusetts, published a pamphlet which detailed the biased charges against Kneeland and espoused the cause for civil liberties. The pamphlet stated that Kneeland's trial "strikes at the root of the liberty of conscience, and the freedom of the Press" and has consequences which threaten "the destruction of the free institutions of this country."[20]

A fourth trial in Judge Wilde's court one year later ended in a conviction.

Kneeland's next appeal was to Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw's Supreme Judicial Court. *Commonwealth v. Kneeland* commenced March 1836. Dunlap had died and Kneeland represented himself, as he had done in the previous trial in Wilde's court. The state was represented by Attorney General James T. Austin. Kneeland repeated all the arguments used in previous four trials and claimed that the charges as recorded in the indictment constituted no offense. He pointed out that Putnam had admitted that an atheist might propagate his opinions and Wilde had admitted that the truth of the scriptures might be denied. However, both "annex the condition that it must be done decently"[21] Kneeland offered the court examples of works by noted authors such as Voltaire,

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Attorney of the Commonwealth at the Trials of Abner Kneeland, . . . 1834. Copy at Harvard University Library. Samuel Dunn Parker lived from 1780-1873.

[20]David Henshaw, *Review of the Prosecution Against Abner Kneeland for Blasphemy.* Boston: 1835. Compare to *Review of the Prosecution Against Abner Kneeland for Blasphemy* by a cosmopolite. Boston: [s.n.], 1835, 32 pages. See also Andrew H. Ward, "David Henshaw," *Memorial Biographies of the New England Historic and Genealogical Society.* Vol. I. Boston: 1880-1908, p. 492; and Levy (1973), p. xii.

[21]Abner Kneeland, *Speech of Abner Kneeland: Delivered Before the Full Bench of Judges of the Supreme Court, in His Own Defence, for the Alleged Crime of Blasphemy. Law Term March 8, 1836.* Boston: J. Q. Adams, 1836, p. 11 (viii, 44 pages).

Priestly and Swift who also discussed the Immaculate Conception, the subject of the first count of indictment against him. "Is vulgarity the privileged monopoly of the high dignitaries of the Church, like Swift?. . .Why begin with me?"[22] asked Kneeland. On the second count concerning the ridicule of prayer, Kneeland offered more examples of noted authors, including Charles Chauncey, the second president of Harvard, who attacked prayers as "hell-bred superstition." Kneeland summed up the second count saying ". . .unless about one half of the community are guilty of blasphemy, the language used in the second article complained of in the indictment is 'decent.'"[23]

The third count, upon which the attorney general built his main case, concerned the letter Kneeland had written to the Universalist preacher. The letter contained no cursing or "contumelious reproach" and Kneeland maintained that a disbelief in the doctrines of Christianity was not prohibited by the statute. He posed part of his argument on the grounds of grammatical analysis of his words. He had expressed a disbelief in God in the letter, not a denial. A disbelief is an expression of doubt, he argued, and a denial is a positive assertion without any doubt. The statute upon which the state's case was built referred only to wilful denial. ". . .I never intended to express even a disbelief in, much less a denial of, God,"[24] claimed Kneeland. Kneeland also pointed to the punctuation used in two sentences included in the indictment: "Universalists believe in a god which I do not." and "Universalists believe in Christ, which I do not." The use of commas in the sentences, he claimed, underscored his argument. The first sentence has no comma after god. "I did not intend to express. . .my disbelief in God, but in 'a god,' that is, the 'god' or belief of the Universalists," he explained. In the second sentence, because of the comma, his intention was clearly to express a disbelief in Christ, he added. Kneeland cited *Murray's Grammar*, vol. 1, p. 31, to defend his argument. He also claimed he intended to express a disbelief in "a

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[22]Kneeland (1836), p. 13.

[23]Kneeland (1836), p. 16.

[24]Kneeland (1836), p. 17.

god," the "god" or belief of the Universalist Church. This he compared to the Trinitarians, who believe in god as the son, the father and the holy spirit, as an expression of an extended belief in God, rather than a narrow belief of God as on the divine spirit.[25]

He turned his attention next to the constitutionality of the statute under which he was being prosecuted. "This Bill of Rights is a shield for the weak, not a weapon of persecution for the hand of the strong," he contended.[26] He argued that the statute violated Article II of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights which granted persons the right to worship "in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience; or for his religious profession, or sentiments."[27] Judge Wilde's decision in the previous trial had stripped him of this protection by declaring Kneeland's atheistic denial of God an irreligious profession. Kneeland argued for a broad interpretation of Article II under the maxim of Jefferson, that "error of opinion may be safely tolerated, when reason is left free to combat it." If the court applied a strict interpretation and branded his sentiments as irreligious, then the legislature and the courts might be free to "harass by penal prosecutions" all who maintained religious observances they considered irreligious. Kneeland pointed out that this meant only conformists could have no fear of being persecuted. He declared that Article II was intended for those who professed unpopular sentiments respecting religion. Kneeland pointed out that Austin had argued that the defendant would wish to carry the liberty of the press "to anything and everything I might choose to print." He admitted that was true, in relation to religion and all other general subjects. "But if I slander my neighbor," said Kneeland, "he has a right to a civil action for damages. . ."[28] Kneeland concluded his argument saying:

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[25]Kneeland (1836), p. 18.

[26]Kneeland (1836), p. 31.

[27]Kneeland (1836), p. 28.

[28]Kneeland (1836), p. 43.

> "I stand on a ground as broad as space, and as firm as a rock of ages; to wit, on the right of conscience, together with the privilege of the freedom of speech and the liberty of the press."[29]

Among the 2,200 opinions written by Shaw, whom Oliver Wendell Holmes regarded as "the greatest magistrate" in American history,[30] this one does not so much reveal his greatness as it confirms that Shaw was "a man of intense and doting biases."[31]

According to Shaw, the two-year delay in handing down the decision was caused by the difficult questions raised by the case and by the different opinions among the judges. In spite the deliberation claimed by the Chief Justice, the court opined that because no evidence was erroneously admitted, or rejected, and no incorrect direction in matter of law were given, the

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[29]Kneeland (1836), p. 40.

[30]Levy (1973), p. xv. See also George E. Macdonald, *Fifty Years of Freethought*. Vol. I. 1929, p. 487, where the following appears: "One of our Oakland subscribers, Mrs. Dolly Broneer, was a descendant of Good Abner Kneeland, founder of *The Investigator*, who back in the '30's had been a prisoner for blasphemy in Massachusetts. Mrs. Broneer showed me an acrostic written by Uncle Abner when he was 68 (two years before his death) to Dorcas Jane Rice, who was Dolly Broneer's mother. It ran thus, in quite classical form:

"Delightful theme as e'er engaged the tongue,
Or more sublime than ever poet sung,
Remote from bigotry or slavish fear,
Conjoined with love and all that men hold dear,
Are modest virtue, pure in every sense;
Sincerity of heart, benevolence,
Justice and kindness join to make the sum,
As all the graces harmonize as one,
Now the result of all is happiness --
E'en bigots here must surely this confess.
Rejoice, then, now that we have found the road,
Immortal bliss is ever doing good;
Contented in its lot, does not repine;
Enrobed in truth the graces ever shine."

Signed "Abner Kneeland" with a neat and proper flourish and dated at Salubria, I. T., the initials standing for Iowa Territory. MacDonald (1929), Vol. II, p. 252, also notes the end of Kneeland's creation as follows: "The condition of the Freethought papers in 1904 showed a falling away. *The Boston Investigator*, established in 1831 by Abner Kneeland, and now being issued at a loss by L. K. Washburn, suspended publication on July 30 and turned over its subscription list to *The Truth Seeker*, Mr. Washburn signing up as contributing editor."

[31]Charles Francis Adams, *Richard Henry Dana*, Vol. I. Boston: 1891, p. 354.

verdict of guilty by the lower court would be considered "taken as proved."[32] Kneeland's argument that he had merely expressed a disbelief in God, and not a denial, violated Shaw's definition of blasphemy because, in Shaw's view, his disbelief constituted a denial. The opinion did not address the issue of whether Kneeland be held responsible for the articles not written by him, in spite of court's order that the case be considered on the "whole indictment and all the circumstances."[33]

Shaw's argument regarding Kneeland's claim that the statute violated the state constitution was based on an interpretation that blasphemy was a common-law, or judge-made, crime, which supersedes the fundamental law of the constitution. In other words, Christianity was part and parcel of the common law and therefore Kneeland's argument that the statute was repugnant to the state constitution was irrelevant. According to Shaw, the defendant's argument concerning freedom of the press was couched in common law as expounded by Chief Justice James De Lancey in the Zenger case in 1735 and Sir William Blackstone in his book on the laws of England.[34] The court claimed Kneeland's definition of freedom of the press would make "all incitation to treason, assassination, and all other crimes however atrocious, if conveyed in printed language. . .dispunishable."[35] This of course ignored Kneeland's point that the author of slanderous language be held accountable. This argument also interpreted Article XVI as a prohibition of prior restraint.

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[32]*Commonwealth v. Kneeland*, pp. 211-225.

[33]*Commonwealth v. Kneeland*, pp. 216-217.

[34]Leonard W. Levy, *Emergence of a Free Press*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, pp. 12-13.

[35]*Commonwealth v. Kneeland*, p. 210.

Shaw also found no grounds for Kneeland's argument that the statute violated religious liberty. Shaw interpreted "willfully" as "with a bad purpose."[36] This interpretation meant that the statute was intended not to restrain the profession of any religious sentiments, but to punish acts that would have a "tendency to disturb the public peace."[37] Therefore, in Shaw's view, Kneeland's guilt was based on the tendency of his espoused opinions. This bad-tendency test was at variance with other interpretations of freedom of opinion on religion at that point in time. For example, Virginia's Statute for Establishing Religious Freedom enacted in 1786 opined that government should not interfere until the avowed principles break out into overt acts against peace.[38]

In his lone dissenting opinion, Judge Marcus Morton argued that Article II should be broadly interpreted to include religious and irreligious professions in order to protect the beliefs and disbeliefs of individuals. He opined that individuals' opinions on the existence of God are "entirely above all civil authority" and that religious truths do not need to be legislated. In his view, for Kneeland's acts to be deemed criminal Kneeland's denial of God must have been inspired by malice for the purpose of injuring others and a willful denial was no crime because "willful" meant "obstinate." Morton declared that no man "may be punished for doing what he has a legal right to do," and concluded that Kneeland's conviction "rests very heavily upon my mind."[39]

A petition, signed by 168 reformers and intellectuals who urged a pardon for Kneeland, was presented to Massachusetts Governor Edward Everett. Everett, a Whig who had faced the

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[36]*Commonwealth v. Kneeland*, p. 221.

[37]*Commonwealth v. Kneeland*, p. 221

[38]Preamble to statute of 1786 in *Hening Statutes* 12, p. 84.

[39]*Commonwealth v. Kneeland*, pp. 225-246.

Jacksonian dissenter Morton in the previous four elections, rejected the petition. Kneeland served his 60-day sentence in summer of 1838.

In 1839 Kneeland migrated westward to Iowa and attempted to establish a utopian community, perhaps following the examples of his social reformer friends Robert Dale Owen and Frances Wright. Called Salubria, this community was to be co-operative and based on the precepts of free thought. The colony never succeeded in attracting residents but Kneeland became involved in local Iowa politics as a Democrat. But Kneeland's beliefs tagged him as an "infidel" and he withdrew from politics in 1842. Kneeland died of a stroke August 27, 1844.[40]

As an historical figure of the early Republic, Kneeland bridged the gap between free-thinking iconoclasts and revolutionaries such as Thomas Paine to later "respected" free-thinkers such as Robert Ingersoll. Through his own writings as well as those he published, Kneeland sought to bring enlightenment to the general public and free the masses from the domination and terror produced by clergy not far removed philosophically from those who led the earlier Salem witch trials. He helped in the fight to unravel the feminine mystique by openly discussing sexual needs and issues such as contraception, thus foreshadowing the work of Margaret Sanger and other New England feminists.

In the end, Kneeland was significant as one of the first American journalists to view the magazine as a major vehicle for social commentary and public policy issues.Though he failed to find justice in the courts and as a builder of a utopian community, without Kneeland's inspiration many later "truth seekers" would not have had the courage to take on American political-religious-social structures stacked against independence of thought. Indeed, Kneeland's free speech fight

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[40]Ruth A. Gallaher, "Abner Kneeland--Pioneer Pantheist,"*The Palimpsest*, 20:7 (1939), pp. 209-225; Margaret Atherton Bonney, "The Salubria Story,"*The Palimpsest* 56:2 (March/April 1975), pp. 34-45; George Shane, "Few Recall 'Infidel' Town of Salubria," *Annals of Iowa*, 3rd series, 37 (1964), pp. 397-399; Don Doyle Brown, *Tell a Tale of Iowa*. Des Moines, Iowa: Wallace-Homestead Co., 1965, chapter 12; and Abner Kneeland, *Salubria—Memories of the Abner Kneeland Project in Van Buren County, Iowa*. Salubria, Iowa: Author, n.d. Pamphlet, copy in Iowa State Historical Society.

and journalistic commitment to pursuing the facts as he saw them continue to reverberate today among those for whom dissent is not a four-letter word.

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ABNER KNEELAND (1774-1844) TIMELINE:

1774, April 7—Abner Kneeland born in Gardner, Mass.

1795—Moved to Dumerston, Vt., where he works as a carpenter and school teacher. Subsequently joins the Baptist church and briefly serves as a preacher. However, his views are soon viewed by some as heretical and he later turns to Universalism.

1803—Licensed as a Universalist preacher, working in Langdon, N.H., where he also regularly preaches to Congregationalists.

1805, October 30—Regularly ordained as pastor of the Universalist Church in Langdon, continuing in that role until 1811.

1810—Elected to New Hampshire House of Representatives, serving in 1810 and 1811 sessions.

1812-1814—Pastor of a church in Charlestown, Mass.

1814-1817—After religious doubts, engages in merchandise business in Salem, Mass. Continues correspondence with his friend, the Rev. Hosea Ballou, on the authenticity of the scriptures and their letters are published in 1816.

1817—Resumes preaching and briefly holds a pastorate in Whitestown, N.Y.

1818—Becomes pastor of the Lombard Street Universalist Church in Philadelphia.

1822—Publishes a translation of the New Testament.

1825—Moves to New York City as pastor of the Prince Street Universalist Church.

1827—Schism in Prince Street Church caused by Kneeland's "boldness in preaching" leads to his resignation. Kneeland also publishes *A Key to the New System of Orthography*.

1827, June—Second Universalist Society of New York organized, with Rev. Abner Kneeland as pastor.

1829, May—Resigns from the Universalist Church.

1830—Moves to Boston in 1830 and lectures at the newly formed First Society of Free Enquirers.

1831, April—Founds a weekly newspaper devoted to religious free thought, *The Investigator*, in Boston. This evolves from earlier Universalist publications he edited to become the nation's first nationally-circulated news outlet for dissident deist/atheist views.

1833, December 20—An article in *The Investigator* results in legal action against Kneeland early in the following year.

1835—Convicted of religious blasphemy in a Massachusetts trial for circulating "moral poison" in his "infidel newspaper," *The Investigator*. This evolved from earlier Universalist publications Kneeland edited, to become the nation's first nationally-circulated news outlet for deist/atheist views. Although Kneeland later turned the management of *The Investigator* over to Horace Seaver and others, it continued to influence the entire freethought movement and served to inspire later leaders such as Robert Ingersoll.

1836, March—Appeal to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court is heard.

1838—Trials and appeals of Kneeland conclude with his conviction. He moves to Iowa Territory, helps found the utopian community of Salubria, and becomes active in politics.

1844, August 27—Kneeland dies.

1904, July 30--*The Investigator*, being issued at a loss by L. K. Washburn, suspends publication and turns over its subscription list to *The Truth Seeker*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING:

(1) Books, Pamphlets, Sermons and Related Materials by Kneeland:

Kneeland, Abner. *A Brief Sketch of a New System of Orthography*. 1807. The first of a number books and articles by Kneeland promoting reformed spelling.

Kneeland, Abner. *For the Use of Those who are "Slaves to No Sect."* Boston: *Boston Investigator*, 1836. Free-thought hymnbook.

Kneeland, Abner. *A Funeral Sermon On The Death Of Captain Abijah Harding: Who was Killed by The Fall of a Tree in Barre, Mass., February 23, 1826, Aged 84 Years. Delivered at the Special Request of His Surviving Relatives and Friends in the First Universalist Church in the City of New York, on Sunday, March 12, 1826 by Abner Kneeland.* New York: Finch, 1826, 16 pages.

Kneeland, Abner. *Key to the New System of Orthography*. 1827.

Kneeland, Abner. *Letters from the Editor, Abner Kneeland, to the Boston Investigator, June 1839 - December 1839*. Microfilm, 1 reel.

Kneeland, Abner. *Minutes of a Discussion on Question: "Is the Punishment of the Wicked Absolutely Eternal? Or is it Only a Temporal Punishment in This World, for Their Good, and to be Succeeded by Eternal Happiness After Death?" Between Abner Kneeland and W. W. M'calla, Which Commence at the First Independent Church Of Christ, Called Universalist, in Lombard Street, Philadelphia, on Tuesday Morning, July 13th, and Concluded on the Evening of Friday Following. Taken in Short—Hand by R. L. Jennings.* [Philadelphia?]: Printed for the publisher, 1824; 336 pages.

Kneeland, Abner. Sermon book used as a scrap book, containing his call to the ministry, 1813; "Prayer of the Freethinker," 1831; and Argument of the prosecution in the blasphemy case, 1834. In Davenport Vault, .K733 - Kneeland. State of Iowa. Historical Division of the Department of Cultural Affairs. State Historical Society of Iowa. Library/Archives Bureau. Des Moines.

Kneeland, Abner. *Three Sermons: Delivered in the First Universalist Church, in the City of New York on Easter Sunday, March 26, 1826, in Which is Embodied a Brief Portraiture of Christian Theology*. New York: J. Finch, 1826, iv, 42 pages.

Kneeland, Abner. *Valedictory Address*. Boston: *The Investigator*, 1839. Pamphlet reprint of an article originally appearing in the April 3, 1839 issue of *The Investigator*.

(2) Newspapers and Magazines Edited by Abner Kneeland, Arranged Chronologically:

The Christian Messenger. [edited by the Rev. Abner Kneeland]. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Published by the editor, 1819 - Vol. 1, no. 1 (August 7, 1819) - Vol. 2, no. 51 (July 21, 1821). Superseded *Philadelphia Universalist Magazine and Christian Messenger*. Microfilm. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1948. 1 microfilm reel. "American Periodical Series, 1800-1850"; 82.

The Philadelphia Universalist Magazine and Christian Messenger. [edited by the Rev. Abner Kneeland]. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Published by the editor, 1821 - Vol. 1, no. 1 (August 1821) - Vol. 2, no. [ ], (July 1823). Superseded *The Gazetteer* (Philadelphia, Pa.). Continues *Christian Messenger* (Philadelphia, Pa.). Microfilm. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1951. 1 microfilm reel. "American Periodical Series, 1800-1825"; 187. This Universalist periodical was a continuation of *The Christian Messenger* devoted to "doctrine, religion, and morality." It offered moral and religious essays, poetry, and sermons, as well as news of church activities.

The Gazetteer. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: edited by Abner Kneeland, 1824 - Vol. 1, no. 1 (January 7, 1824) - Vol. 1, no. 52 (December 29, 1824). Continued *Philadelphia Universalist Magazine and Christian Messenger*. Microfilm. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1949. 1 microfilm reel. "American Periodical Series, 1800-1850"; 107.

Olive Branch. New York, N.Y: edited by Abner Kneeland, 1828 - Vol. 1, no. 1 (June 1827) - April 1828, when merged in *Christian Inquirer*, May 1828. Universalist weekly newspaper.

Olive Branch and Christian Inquirer. New York, N.Y: edited by Abner Kneeland, May 1828-May 1829. Also a weekly devoted to "free inquiry, pure morality and rational christianity."

Kneeland had some connection (contributor? stories about?) with *The Enquirer*, New Harmony, Indiana (October 29, 1828- September 25, 1830) and with *Disseminator*, New Harmony, Indiana (January 3, 1835 - June 25, 1836). Copies of these issues are in the Iowa State Historical Society on microfilm B K733.

The Investigator (commonly called *The Boston Investigator*). Boston, Mass.: *The Investigator*, April 1831-July 30, 1904, edited by Abner Kneeland (1831-1838). In 1904, the content and mailing list were merged into *The Truth Seeker*.

(3) Publications by Others Referring to Kneeland:

Ballou, Rev. Hosea. *Series of Letters in Defense of Divine Revelation; in Reply to the Rev. Abner Kneeland's Serious Inquiry into the Authenticity of the Same*. Salem, Mass: 1816; 2d ed. Boston: 1820.

Harlan, E. R. *Van Buren County Group of Famous Men*. 1926. In Iowa State Historical Society Library, features profile on Kneeland.

Hoornstra, Jean and Trudy Heath, eds. *American Periodicals, 1741-1900: An Index to the Microfilm Collections--American Periodicals 18th Century, American Periodicals, 1800-1850, American Periodicals, 1850-1900, Civil War and Reconstruction*. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1979.

McCabe, Joseph. *A Biographical Dictionary of Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Freethinkers*. (online ed., http://www.infidels.org/./library/historical/joseph_mccabe/dictionary.html).

Kneeland, Stillman F. *Seven Centuries in the Kneeland Family*. New York: Author, 1897. Stillman F. Kneeland was a Judge Advocate General of the state of New York and Abner Kneeland's nephew. Copy on microfilm B K 733 at State Historical Society of Iowa. Library/Archives Bureau. Des Moines.

Life of William Ellery Channing. Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1899. See, especially, p. 306.

(4) Other Kneeland Trial- and Journalism-Related Materials:

"Blasphemy." *Columbia Law Review* 70 (1970), pp. 694-733.

Levy, Leonard W. *The Law of the Commonwealth and Chief Justice Shaw*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957.

McCormick, John, and Mairi MacInnes. *Versions of Censorship*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1962.

Mott, Frank Luther. *American Journalism, a History: 1690-1960*. New York: Macmillan, 1962.

Nelson, Harold L. *Freedom of the Press from Hamilton to the Warren Court*. Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967.

Nelson, Richard Alan. *A Chronology and Glossary of Propaganda in the United States*. New York and London: Greenwood Press, 1996.

Tedford, Thomas L. *Freedom of Speech in the United States*. New York: Random House, 1985.

(5) Key Library Indexing Terms:

Blasphemy.

Christianity—Controversial literature.

Free thought.

Freedom of Religion—Massachusetts.

Freedom of Speech.

Humanism.

Journalism--United States--History--19th Century.

Kneeland, Abner, 1774-1844.

Massachusetts. Municipal Court (Boston).

Punishment—Universalism.

Salubria, Iowa.

Trials (Blasphemy).

Universalism—Periodicals.

Universalists.